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RUTHERFORD AND SON

RUTHERFORD AND SON

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

GITHA SOWERBY

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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CHARACTERS

JOHN RUTHERFORD,

JOHN, }
RICHARD, } his Sons.

JANET, his Daughter.

ANN, his Sister.

MARY, young John's Wife.

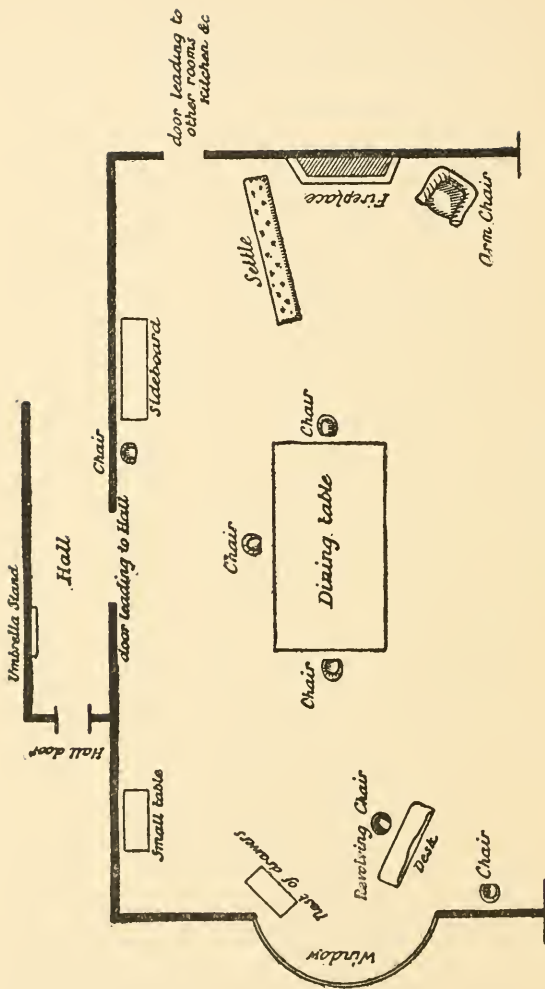
MARTIN.

MRS. HENDERSON.

SCENE.— *Living room in John Rutherford's house.*

Two days elapse between Acts I. and II.

One night between Acts II. and III.



PLAN OF STAGE

RUTHERFORD AND SON

ACT I

John Rutherford's house stands on the edge of the moor, far enough from the village to serve its dignity and near enough to admit of the master going to and from the Works in a few minutes — a process known to the household as "going across." The living room, in which the family life has centred for generations, is a big square room furnished in solid mahogany and papered in red, as if to mitigate the bleakness of a climate that includes five months of winter in every year. There is a big table in the middle of the room covered with a brown cloth at which the family take their meals. An air of orderliness pervades the room, which perhaps accounts for its being extremely uncomfortable. From above the heavy polished sideboard the late John Rutherford looks down from his frame and sees the settle and armchair on either side of the fire, the marble clock on the mantelpiece, the desk with its brass inkstand and

neatly arranged bundles of papers precisely as he saw them in life.

On this particular evening in December Ann Rutherford is sitting by the fire alternately knitting and dozing. She is a faded, querulous woman of about sixty, and wears a black dress with a big flat brooch and a cap with lilac ribbons. Mary Rutherford, a gentle delicate-looking woman of twenty-six, is seated on the settle opposite to her making a baby's cap; she is bending forward to catch the light of the fire on her work, for the lamp has not yet been brought in.

Presently Janet comes in carrying a silver basket and a pair of carpet slippers. She is a heavy dark woman, some ten years older than Mary, with an expressionless tired face and monotonous voice. All her movements are slipshod and aimless, and she seldom raises her eyes. She is dressed in a dark dress of some warm material with white collar and cuffs.

Janet [glancing at the clock]. He's not back yet.

Ann. No. . . . If you mean your father.

Janet [folding up the brown cloth preparatory to laying the table]. Who else should I mean?

Ann. You might mean any one. . . . You always talk about he and him, as if there was no one else in the house.

Janet. There isn't.

Ann. Answer me back, that's the way. [*Janet makes no reply. She puts the silver basket on the table and comes to the fire with the slippers.*] There — put his slippers down to warm. The Committee room's cold as ice, and he'll come in like the dead.

Mary [*looking up from her work for a moment*]. I believe it's going to freeze to-night — the chimneys are flaring so. [*Janet drops the shoes one by one on to the hearthrug without stooping.*]

Ann. They'll never warm there! I never seed sic a feckless lass. [*Stoops laboriously and sets them up against the fender.*] Is the dinner all right?

Janet. Susan's let the pie get burnt, but I've scraped the top off — he won't notice. The girdle cake's as tough as leather. She'll have to do a fresh one — if there's time.

Ann. You might ha' seen to things a bit.

Janet. I have. There wouldn't ha' been a pie at all if I hadn't. The oven damper's gone wrong.

Ann. Answer me — answer yer aunt! You and your dampers — and there you are a-laying the table and ye know weel enough yer father's forbid you to do things like a servant.

Janet. What else is there to do? I can't sit and sew all day.

Ann. I'm sure I'm never done finding fault

from morning to night with one thing and another.

Janet. Don't then.

Ann. And a nice thing if I didn't! Nothing ever done in the house unless I see to it — that's what it comes to.

Janet [*spreading the cloth*]. You'll drop your stitches.

Ann. You never stir yourself, nor Mary neither, for that matter.

Mary. I can't do much else with Tony to look after, Miss Rutherford.

Janet. There's no need for her to do anything. It's not her business.

Ann. Nor anybody's business, it seems to me. [*Subsiding.*] I don't know what's come to Susan nowadays, she's that daft — a head like a sieve, and that clumsy-handed.

Janet. Susan's got a man.

Ann. Well, I never!

Janet. That's what she says. It's one of the men at the Works. He hangs about on his way home from the night shift — when she ought to be doing the rooms. . . . Susan's happy . . . that's why she forgot to take the milk out of the can. There's no cream for the pudding.

Ann. And he's so particular about his cream.

Janet. He'll have to do without for once. And what with the pie burnt — and the girdle cake like leather, if he comes in before the other's ready — I

should think we'll have a fair evening. [*She leaves the room.*]

Ann. Eh, dearie — dearie. Sic doings!

Mary [*absorbed in her cap*]. Never mind, Miss Rutherford.

Ann. Never mind! It's weel for you to talk.

Mary. Janet'll see that it's all right. She always does, though she talks like that.

Ann. Her and her sulky ways. There's no doing anything with her of late. She used to be bad enough as a lass, that passionate and hard to drive. She's ten times worse now she's turned quiet.

Mary. Perhaps she's tired with the long walks she takes. She's been out nearly two hours this afternoon in the rain.

Ann [*turning to her knitting*]. What should she have to put her out — except her own tempers.

Mary [*trying to divert her attention*]. Miss Rutherford, look at Tony's cap; I've nearly finished it.

Ann [*still cross*]. It's weel enough. Though what he wants wi' a lot o' bows standing up all over his head passes me.

Mary. They're butterfly bows.

Ann. Butterfly bows! And what'll butterfly bows do for 'n? They'll no' keep his head warm.

Mary. But he looks such a darling in them. I'll put it on to-morrow when I take him out, and you'll see.

Ann. London ways — that's what it is.

Mary. Do north country babies never have bows on their caps?

Ann. Not in these parts. And not the Rutherford's anyway. Plain and lasting — that's the rule in this family, and we bide by it, babies and all. But you can't be expected to know, and you like a stranger in the hoose. [*Janet comes in carrying a loaf on a trencher, which she puts on the table.*]

Mary. I've been here nearly three months.

Ann. And this very night you sit wasting your time making a bit trash fit for a monkey at a fair. A body would think you would ha' learned better by now.

Janet [*quietly*]. What's the matter with Mary now?

Ann. We can talk, I suppose, without asking your leave?

Janet. It was *you* that was talking. Let her be.

Ann. And there you've been and put the loaf on as if it was the kitchen — and you know weel enough that gentlefolk have it set round in bits.

Janet. Gentle folk can do their own ways. [*She goes out to fetch the knives.*]

Ann [*she gets up laboriously and goes to the table*]. I'll have to do it myself as usual. [*She cuts the bread and sets it round beside the plates.*]

Mary [*who has gone to the window and is look-*

ing out at the winter twilight]. If I'm a stranger, it's you that makes me so.

Ann. Ye've no cause to speak so, lass. . . . I'm not blamin' you. It's no' your fault that you weren't born and bred in the north country.

Mary. No. I can't change that. . . . I wonder what it's like here when the sun shines!

Ann [*who is busy with the bread*]. Sun?

Mary. It doesn't look as if the summer ever came here.

Ann. If ye're looking for the summer in the middle o' December ye'll no' get it. Ye'll soon get used to it. Ye've happened on a bad autumn for your first, that's all.

Mary. My first.

Ann. Ye're a bit saft wi' livin' in the sooth, nae doubt. They tell me there's a deal of sunshine and wickedness in them parts.

Mary. The people are happier, I think.

Ann. Mebbe. Bein' happy'll make no porridge. [*She goes back to her chair.*]

Mary. I lived in Devonshire when I was a child, and everywhere there were lanes. But here — it's all so old and stern — this great stretch of moor, and the fells — and the trees — all bent one way, crooked and huddled.

Ann [*absorbed in her knitting*]. It's the sea-wind that does it.

Mary. The one that's blowing now?

Ann. Aye.

Mary [*with a shiver*]. Shall I draw the curtains?

Ann. Aye. [*Mary draws the curtains. After a silence she speaks again gently.*]

Mary. I wonder if you'll ever get used to me enough to — like me?

Ann [*with the north country dislike of anything demonstrative*]. Like you! Sic a question — and you a kind of a relation.

Mary. Myself, I mean.

Ann. You're weel enough. You're a bit slip of a thing, but you're John's wife, and the mother of his bairn, and there's an end.

Mary. Yes, that's all I am! [*She takes up her work again.*]

Ann. Now you're talking.

Mary [*sewing*]. Don't think I don't understand. John and I have been married five years. All that time Mr. Rutherford never once asked to see me; if I had died, he would have been glad.

Ann. I don't say that. He's a proud man, and he looked higher for his son after the eddication he'd given him. You mustn't be thinking such things.

Mary [*without bitterness*]. Oh, I know all about it. If I hadn't been Tony's mother, he would never have had me inside his house. And if I hadn't been Tony's mother, I wouldn't have come. Not for anything in the world. . . .

It's wonderful how he's picked up since he got out of those stuffy lodgings.

Ann [*winding up her wool*]. Well, Mr. Rutherford's in the right after all.

Mary. Oh, yes. He's in the right.

Ann. It's a bitter thing for him that's worked all his life to make a place i' the world to have his son go off and marry secret-like. Folk like him look for a return from their bairns. It's weel known that no good comes of a marriage such as yours, and it's no wonder that it takes him a bit of time to make up his mind to bide it. [*Getting up to go.*] But what's done's done. [*Young John Rutherford comes in while she is speaking. He is delicate-looking and boyish in speech and manner — attractive, in spite of the fact that he is the type that has been made a gentleman of and stopped half-way in the process.*]

John [*mimicking her tone*]. So it is, Aunt Ann. Dinner's late, isn't it?

Ann. He's not back yet. He's past his time. I'm sure I hope nothing's happened.

John. What should have happened?

Ann. Who's to tell that he hasn't had an accident. Things do happen.

John. They do indeed. He may have jumped into a furnace —

Ann. Ah, you may joke. But you never know. You never know. [*She wanders out, with the vague intention of seeing to the dinner.*]

John. Cheery old soul, Aunt Ann. No one's ever five minutes late but she kills and buries them. [*Pause.*] What's she been saying to you?

Mary [*sewing*]. She's been talking about — us.

John. I should have thought that subject was about threadbare by now. [*Pause.*] What's she say?

Mary. The usual things. How angry your father still is, and how a marriage like ours never comes to good ——

John. Oh, rot. Anyway, we needn't talk about it. [*She looks quickly up at him and her face changes.*]

Mary. Some one's always talking about it.

John. Who is?

Mary. Miss Rutherford — any of them. Your father would, if he ever spoke to me at all. He looks it instead.

John. Oh, nonsense; you imagine things. The Guv'nor's like that with us all — it's always been so; besides, he doesn't like women — never notices them. [*Trying to make it all right.*] Look here, I know it's rather beastly for you just now, but it'll be all right in time. Things are going to change, so don't you worry, little woman.

Mary. What are we going to do?

John. Do? What should we do?

Mary. Anything. To get some money of our own. To make some sort of life for ourselves, away from here.

John. You wait till I get this invention of mine set going. As for getting away, please remember it was you who insisted on coming. I never wanted you to.

Mary. I had to come. Tony was always ailing in London.

John. You never left me alone till I'd crawled to the Guv'nor and asked to come back.

Mary. What else was there left to do? You couldn't find work ——

John. If you'd had patience and waited, things would have been all right.

Mary. I've waited five years. I couldn't go on earning enough when Tony came.

John [sulkily]. Well you couldn't expect me to ask the Guv'nor to keep us all three. And if I had stayed in London with you instead of coming back when he gave me the chance, what good would it have done? I'd have missed the biggest thing of my life — I know that. . . . Anyway, I do hate this going back over it all. Beastly, sorry —

Mary [looking before her]. I couldn't go on. I'd done it so long — long before you knew me. Day after day in an office. The crowded train morning and night — bad light — bad food — and because I did that my boy is small and delicate. It's been nothing else all along — the bare struggle for life. I sometimes think that it's the only reality in the world.

John [*ill-humoured*]. Whether it's the only reality or not, I call it a pretty deadly way of looking at things.

Mary. It is — deadly. I didn't know how deadly till I began to care for you and thought it was going to be different.

John. The old story.

Mary. No, no, we won't look back. But oh, John, I do so dreadfully want things for Tony. [*John begins to move about the room.*] I didn't mind when there was only ourselves. But when he was coming I began to think, to look at the other children — children of people in our position in London — taught to work before they'd had time to learn what work means — with the manhood ground out of them before ever it came. And I thought how that was what we had to give our child, you and I. . . . When your father forgave you for marrying me, and said you might come here, it seemed like a chance. And there's nothing, nothing — except this place you call home.

John. Hang it all —

Mary. Oh, I know it's big — there's food and warmth, but it's like a prison! There's not a scrape of love in the whole house. Your father! — no one's any right to be what he is — never questioned, never answered back — like God! and the rest of you just living round him — neither children, nor men and women — hating each other.

John [*turning to look at her with a sort of won-*

der]. Don't exaggerate. Whatever has set you off talking like this?

Mary. Because I'm always thinking about it.

John. You've never had a home of your own, and you don't make excuses for family life — everybody knows it's like that more or less.

Mary. And you've lived with it always — you can't see it as I do.

John. I do see it. And it's jolly unpleasant — I'm not arguing about that —

Mary. Don't you see that life in this house is intolerable?

John. Well, frankly, no, I don't. That is, I don't see why you should find it so. It's all very well to abuse my people, and I sympathise with you in a way — no one dislikes them more than I do. I know Janet's got a filthy temper, and Aunt Ann — well, she hasn't moved on with the rest of us, poor old soul, that's the long and the short of it. As for the Guv'nor — it's no use beginning to apologise for him.

Mary. Apologise!

John. Well, that's about what you seem to expect. I've told you I quite see that it isn't over pleasant for you, and you might leave it at that, I think. You do drive at one so . . . and you seem to forget how ill I've been.

Mary. I don't forget. But don't you see we may go on like this for twenty years doing nothing?

John. Don't you suppose I wouldn't have done something — do you suppose I didn't mean to do something, if I hadn't been knocked over just at the critical moment? [*Injured.*] Do you suppose I wouldn't rather have been working than lying on my back all these weeks?

Mary [*quietly*]. How about all the other weeks?

John. Good heavens, what more could I do than I have done? Here have I hit on a thing worth thousands — a thing that any glass-maker would give his ears to have the working of. And you talk to me about making money — and a life of our own. Good Lord! we're going to be rich — rich, once it's set going.

Mary [*unimpressed*]. Have you told Mr. Rutherford about it?

John. Yes. At least, I've told him what it is. . . . I haven't told him how it's done — naturally. . . . He won't listen to me — it's like talking to a lump of granite. He'll find he'll have to listen before long. . . . I've set Martin on to him.

Mary. Why Martin?

John. Because he helped me to work it out. And because he happens to be the one person in the world the Guv'nor ever listens to.

Mary [*looking up*]. He trusts Martin, doesn't he? Absolutely.

John. Oh, Lord! yes. Martin can do no

wrong. The Guv'nor'll listen to him all right.

Mary [resuming her work]. When is he going to tell him?

John. Oh, directly he gets a chance. He may have done it already.

Mary [putting down her work]. To-day? Then Martin really believes there's something in it?

John [indignantly]. Something in it! My dear Mary, I know you don't mean to be, but you are most fearfully irritating. Here have I told you over and over again that I'm going to make my fortune, and because some one else agrees with me you're kind enough to believe what I say. One would think you had no faith in me.

Mary [giving it up as hopeless]. I'm sorry. We won't talk of it any more. I've said it all so often — said it till you're sick of hearing it, and it's no good.

John. Molly, don't be cross. . . . I don't mean to be a brute, but it is a bit disappointing, isn't it? When I really have found the right thing at last, to find you so lukewarm about it. Because it really is this time. It'll change everything; and you shall do what you like and enjoy yourself as much as you want to — and forget all about those filthy years in Walton Street. [*He comes to her and puts his arm round her.*] There, don't be a fool. What are you making?

Mary. A cap for Tony.

John. Dear little beggar, isn't he?

Mary. Yes. . . . Don't say things to please me, John.

John. I'm not. I do think he's a dear little beggar. [*Pleased with himself.*] We'll be as happy as kings by and by.

Mary. As happy as we were at first?

John. Happier — we'll have money.

Mary. We couldn't be happier. [*She sits with her hands in her lap, her mouth wistful.*] What a pair of babies we were, weren't we?

John. Oh, I don't know.

Mary. What — blunderers. I thought it was so different — and I dare say you did, too, though you never said so. I suppose it's really true what they think here — that we'd no business to marry and have a child when we'd nothing to give him when he came.

John. What a little worrit you are.

Mary. I do worry, John — you don't know how much.

John. But what about?

Mary. Tony.

John. You funny little thing. Surely there's time enough to think about Tony; he's just four months old.

Mary. Yes, but to me — I suppose every woman thinks about her baby like that — till he's a boy and a man and a child all in one — only he never grows old. [*In a practical tone.*] How long will it take?

John. How long will what take?

Mary. Your invention. [*Looks up quickly.*]
I mean — don't be cross — will it be months — or years, before it pays?

John [*moving away*]. I really can't say — it depends. If the Guv'nor has the sense to see things my way — it depends. [*He takes a cigarette.*]

Mary. I see. You will work at it, won't you? Make it go?

John [*striking a light*]. There's no work to be done. All I've got to do is to sit down and let some one pay for it.

Mary. Sit down? It means so much to us, doesn't it? Everything —

John [*who has burnt his finger*]. It means my getting the whip-hand of the Guv'nor for once in my life. [*Irritably.*] And it means my getting away from your incessant nagging at me about the kid — and money.

Mary. John!

John [*sharply*]. After all, it isn't very pleasant for me having you dependent on the Guv'nor and being reminded of it every other day. I don't choose this kind of life, I can tell you. If you're sick of it, God knows I am. [*While he is speaking Ann drifts into the room again.*]

Ann. There you are — smoking again; and you know what the doctor said. Mary, tell him he's not to.

Mary. John must do as he likes.

John. I must have something; my nerves are all on edge.

Ann. Weel, ye can't expect to be right all of a sudden. When I think o' the Sunday night ye was so bad, I never thought to see ye standin' there now.

John [injured]. I shouldn't worry about that. I don't suppose any one would have been much the worse if I had pegged out.

Ann. Whatever makes you say a thing like that?

John. *Mary.* Yes, you do, *Mary.* To hear you talk one would think I was no good. How do you suppose I've made an invention if I were the rotter you think me?

Mary. I didn't say that — I didn't say that.

Ann. An invention's weel enough if you're not mistaken.

John. Mistaken!

Ann. Ah, but older people nor you make mistakes. There was old Green — I mind him fiddling on wi' a lot of old cogs and screws half his time, trying to find oot the way to prevent a railway train going off the line. And when he did find it and took it to show it to some one as knawed aboot such things, it was so sartin sure not to go off the line that the wheels wouldn't turn roond at all. A poor, half-baked body he was, and his wife without a decent black to show herself in o' Sundays.

John. I'll undertake that my wheels will go round.

Ann. If it's such a wonderful thing, why hasn't some one thought of it afore? Answer me that.

John. You might say that of any new idea that ever came into the world.

Ann. Of course, if you set up to know more about glass-making than your father that's been at it ever since he was a bairn.

John. It isn't a case of knowing. I've a much better chance because I don't know. It's the duffers who get hold of the best things — stumble over them in the dark, as I did. It makes my blood run cold to think how easily I could have missed it, of all the people who must have looked straight at it time after time, and never seen it. [*Contemptuously*]. Hullo, Dick! [*Richard Rutherford has come in from the hall. He wears the regulation clergyman's clothes and looks older than John, though he is in reality the younger by a couple of years. He is habitually overworked, and his face has the rather pathetic look of an overweighted youth that finds life too much for its strength. His manner is extremely simple and sincere, which enables him to use priggish phrases without offence. He comes to the table while John is speaking, looks from him to Ann, then at the butter, sugar, and bread in turn.*]

Dick [*very tired*]. Dinner?

John [*mimicking him*]. Not imminent.

Dick. Will it be long?

Ann [*crossly*]. Ye'll just have to bide quiet till it comes.

Dick [*gently*]. Ah! . . . In that case I think I'll just —— [*He takes a piece of bread and moves towards the door.*]

Ann. You look fair done.

Dick. I've had a tiring day. [*To Mary.*]
Where is Janet?

Mary. In the kitchen. [*She looks at him intently.*] Why did you ask? Do you want her?

Dick [*uncertainly*]. No, no. I thought she might have gone out. It's best for her not to go out after dark.

Ann. You can't sit in your room i' this cold.

Dick. I'll put on a coat. It's quiet there.

John. You'll have time to write your sermon before he comes in, I dare say.

Dick [*simply*]. Oh, I've done that, such as it is. [*He leaves the room, eating his bread as he goes.*]

John [*irritably*]. This is a damned uncomfortable house. I'm starving.

Ann. It's Committee day.

John. He'll be having the whole Board on his toes as usual, I suppose.

Ann. That Board'll be the death of him. When I think of the old days when he'd no-one to please but himself!

John. He's stood it for five years. I wouldn't

—being badgered by a lot of directors who know as much about glass-making as you do.

Ann. That's all very well. But when you borrow money you've got to be respectful one way and another. If he hadn't gone to the Bank how would Rutherfords' ha' gone on?

John [*who has taken up the newspaper and is half reading it as he talks*]. Why should it go on?

Ann [*sharply*]. What's that?

John. Why didn't he sell the place when he could have made a decent profit.

Ann [*scandalised*]. Sell Rutherfords'? Just you let your father hear you.

John. I don't care if he does. I never can imagine why he hangs on — working his soul out year after year.

Ann [*conclusively*]. It's his duty. [*She resumes her knitting.*]

John. Duty — rot! He likes it. He's gone on too long. He couldn't stop and rest if he tried. When I make a few thousands out of this little idea of mine I'm going to have everything I want, and forget all about the dirt and the ugliness, the clatter and bang of the machinery, the sickening hot smell of the furnaces — all the things I've hated from my soul.

Ann [*who has become absorbed in a dropped stitch*]. Aye weel . . . there's another strike at Rayner's, they tell me.

John. Yes. Eight hundred men. That's the second this year.

Ann. You don't think it'll happen here, do you?

John. I can't say. They're smashing things at Rayner's.

Ann. It'll no' come here. The men think too much of your father for that.

John. I'm not so sure.

Ann. There was the beginnings of a strike once — years ago. And he stopped it then. The men at the furnaces struck work — said it was too hard for 'n. And your father he went doon into the caves and took his coat off afore them all, and pitched joost half as much coal again as the best of 'em — now!

John. Yes, that's the sort of argument they can see — it catches hold of the brute in them. If the Guv'nor had sat quietly in his office and sent his ultimatum through the usual channels, he would have been the owner of Rutherfords', and the strike would have run its course. Shovelling coal in his shirt with his muscles straining, and the sweat pouring off him, he was "wor John" — and there's three cheers for his fourteen stone of beef and muscle. That was all very well — thirty years ago.

Ann. And what's to hinder it now?

John. Oh, the Guv'nor was a bit of a hero then — an athlete, a runner. The men who worked for

him all the week crowded to see him run on Saturday afternoons — Martin's told me. But when all's said and done, Rutherfords' is a money-making machine. And the Guv'nor's the only man who doesn't know it. He's getting old.

Ann [crossly]. To hear you talk a body would think we were all going to die to-morrow. Your father's a year younger nor me — now! And a fine up-standing man forbye.

John [who is looking at himself in the glass above the mantelpiece]. Oh, he knows how to manage a pack of savages.

Ann. There's not one of 'em to-day or thirty years ago but'll listen to him.

John. He'd knock any one down who didn't. [*Janet comes in with a tray and begins to set cups and saucers on the table.*]

Ann. They all stood by him when the trouble came, every one of 'em. And he's climbed up steady ever since, and never looked ahint him. And now you've got your invention it'll no' be long now — if it's all you think it. Ah, it 'ud be grand to see Rutherfords' like old times again.

John. Rutherfords'. . . [*He speaks half seriously, half to tease Ann*]. Aunt Ann, have you ever in your life — just for a moment at the back of your mind — wished Rutherfords' at the bottom of the Tyne? [*Ann gazes at him in silence. When she speaks again it is as to a foolish child.*]

Ann. Are you taking your medicine reg'lar?

John. Yes. But have you ever heard of Moloch? No.—Well, Moloch was a sort of a God — some time ago, you know, before Dick and his kind came along. They built his image with an ugly head ten times the size of a real head, with great wheels instead of legs, and set him up in the middle of a great dirty town. [*Janet, busy at the table, stops to listen, raising her eyes almost for the first time.*] And they thought him a very important person indeed, and made sacrifices to him — human sacrifices — to keep him going, you know. Out of every family they set aside one child to be an offering to him when it was big enough, and at last it became a sort of honour to be dedicated in this way, so much so, that the victims gave themselves gladly to be crushed out of life under the great wheels. That was Moloch. [*There is a silence. Janet speaks eagerly.*]

Janet. Where did you get that?

John. Get what?

Janet. What you've been saying.

John. Everybody knows it.

Janet. Dedicated — we're dedicated — all of us — to Rutherfords'. And being respected in Grantley.

Ann. Talk, talk — chatter, chatter. Words never mended nothing that I knows on.

John [*who is tired of the subject*]. Talk — if I hadn't you to talk to, Aunt Ann, or Mary, I think I'd talk to the door-post.

Janet [*who has slipped back into her dull listlessness*]. And just as much good would come of it, I dare say.

Ann. And who are you to say it? You got no book-learning like him — and no invention neither.

Janet [*who is laying forks round the table*]. How do you know he's got an invention?

Ann. Because he says so, o' course — how else? It's a secret.

Janet. John always had a secret. He used to sell them to me when we were little. And when I'd given him whatever it was he'd taken a fancy to, there was no secret. Nothing worth paying for, anyway.

John. Oh, shut up.

Ann [*as if they were children*]. Now, now. Don't quarrel.

Janet. We're not quarrelling.

John. Yes, we are. And you began it.

Janet. I didn't. I only said what any one can see. [*Scornfully*.] You make an invention. Likely.

John. A lot you know about it.

Janet. If you did, you'd muck it somehow, just as you do everything.

Ann [*querulously*]. Bairns! Bairns! One would think you'd never growed up.

John [*angrily to Janet*]. I wish you'd keep quiet if you can't say anything decent. You never open your mouth except to say something disagree-

able. First there's Mary throwing cold water, then you come in.

Janet. I'm not any more disagreeable than any one else. We're all disagreeable if it comes to that. All except Susan.

Ann. Susan's not one of the family! A common servant lass.

Janet. Like me.

Ann [*using the family threat*]. Just you let your father hear you.

Janet. We do the same things.

Ann. Susan's paid for it. Whoever gave you a farthing?

Janet [*bitterly*]. Aye!

Ann. Has she made another girdle cake?

Janet. I didn't notice. She's probably talking to her young man at the gate.

John. Susan with a young man!

Ann. Yes, indeed — a nice thing, and her turned forty.

John. Ugliest woman I ever saw bar none. Who is it? Not Martin surely! [*Janet stops suddenly and looks at him.*] I've noticed he's been making excuses to come about lately, and he's taken the cottage at the Tarn.

Janet [*with a sudden stillness*]. It isn't Martin.

John. Well, if it is, the Guv'nor would soon put a stop to it.

Janet. Put a stop to what?

John. Martin getting married — if it's that he's after?

Janet. What right's he to interfere?

John. Right — nonsense! Martin practically lives at the Works, as it is. If he had a wife he'd get to be just like the other men — hankering after going home at the proper time, and all that.

Ann [*preparing to leave the room*]. You and your gossip — and the dinner spoiling every minute. [*With a parting shot at Janet.*] It's a good thing nobody's married you — a nice house you'd make without me to look to everything. [*She fusses out.*]

John. Married! Cheer up, Janet! Thirty-five last birthday, isn't it?

Mary. John!

Janet [*her voice hard*]. No, it isn't. It's thirty-six.

John. You'll make a happy home for some one yet. No one's asked you so far, I suppose?

Janet. Who's there been to ask me?

John. Oh, I don't know. I suppose you have been kept pretty close. Other girls manage it, don't they?

Janet. I don't know other girls.

John. Mary caught me.

Janet. I don't know anybody — you know that. No one in Grantley's good enough for us, and we're not good enough for the other kind.

John. Speak for yourself.

Janet. Oh, we're all alike; don't you fret. Why hasn't young Squire Earnshaw invited you to shoot with him again? He did once — when none of his grand friends were there. [*John pretends not to hear.*]

Janet. I know why.

John. Oh, you know a lot, don't you?

Janet. It was because you pretended — pretended you knew the folk he talked about, because you'd show them over the Works once when father was away. Pretended you said "parss" for pass every day. I heard you. And I saw the difference. Gentlemen are natural. Being in company doesn't put them about. They don't say thank you to servants neither, not like you do to Susan.

John. Oh, shut up, will you?

Janet. I wouldn't pretend whatever I did — mincing round like a monkey.

Ann [*coming in from the kitchen*]. Now, now. That's the door, isn't it? [*They all listen. A voice is heard outside, then the outer door opens.*]

John. Father.

Janet. Martin. [*There is the sound of a stick being put into the umbrella stand; then John Rutherford comes in, followed by Martin. He is a heavily built man of sixty, with a heavy lined face and tremendous shoulders — a typical north countryman. There is a distinct change in the manner of the whole family as he comes in and walks straight to his desk as if the door had*

scarcely interrupted his walk. Martin is a good-looking man of the best type of working man. Very simple in manner and bearing — about forty years of age. He touches his forelock to the family and stands beside the door with nothing servile in either action.]

Rutherford [*talking as he comes in*]. — and it's got to be managed somehow. Lads are wanted and lads'll have to be found. Only six out of the seventeen shops started the first shift o' Monday.

Martin. Grey couldn't start at all last week for want o' lads.

Rutherford. What's got them? Ten years ago you could have had fifty for the asking, and taken your pick. And now here's the work waiting to be done, and half the hands we want to do it lounging about Grantley with their hands in their breeches pockets, the beggars. What do they think they're bred for?

Martin. There's too many of 'em making for the towns, that's it. It's lighter work.

Rutherford. Just remind me to give the men a word o' wages time o' Saturday. They got to keep their lads at home as long as they're wanted at Rutherfords'. [*Turning papers and a bunch of keys out of his pocket on the desk.*] The new lear man's shaping all right then.

Martin. Dale? Knows as much about a pot-arch as I knows about a flying-machine.

Rutherford. Why didn't you tell me before?

Martin. I thought I'd wait to give him a trial. I took a look at the flues myself to make sure it wasn't them at fault. He can't get the heat up properly, and the pots are put into the furnaces afore they're furnace heat. They'll all be broke one o' these days.

Rutherford. We'd better take on Ford.

Martin. He finishes at Cardiff Saturday.

Rutherford. He'll do, I suppose?

Martin [*feeling in his pocket and pulling out a leather purse or bag*]. You couldn't get a better man for the job in all Tyneside. There's the ten pound young Henderson had out o' the cash-box. [*He counts it out on desk.*]

Rutherford. What! He's given it up?

Martin. Aye. Leastways, I took it off him.

Rutherford. Has he owned to it?

Martin. Sure enough. Said he hadn't gone for to do it. Cried like a bairn, he did.

John [*from his arm-chair by the fire*]. Henderson? Has he been stealing?

Martin. Aye, Mr. John. I caught him at it i' the office — at dinner-time when there's nobody much about — wi' his hands i' the box.

John. Dirty little sweep! Have you kicked him out?

Rutherford [*pausing with his hand on his cash-box*]. I suppose there's no doubt he's a bad 'un?

Martin. Bred and born.

Rutherford. No use giving him another chance.

Martin. Throwed away on the likes o' him.

Rutherford [*locking the box and putting it in a drawer*]. Ah. . . . Well, if he comes back, turn him away. Everything ready for the pot-setting in the morning?

Martin. Aye, sir. The night shift'll set four when they stop, and the other shift'll set the others a bit later.

Rutherford. You'll be there to see them do it?

Martin. Surely.

Rutherford [*with a curious softening in his voice*]. When'll you get your rest?

Martin. Plenty o' time for that, sir.

Rutherford [*crossing to fire*]. We'll have you on strike one o' these days, Martin.

Martin [*turning to go*]. Not me, sir. When you begin to spare yourself you can begin to think about sparing me. And next week things'll go easier. . . . Is that all for the night, sir?

Rutherford [*wearily*]. Aye. Good-night to ye. [*He has taken his pipe from the rack above the mantelpiece and is filling it.*] You've further to go now ye're in the Tarn Cottage. [*There is a slight pause before Martin replies.*]

Martin. Aye. A bit mebbe.

Rutherford [*lighting his pipe*]. I — should ha' — thought you'd had done better to stick to your old one — near at hand; but you know your own business best.

Martin. It's weel enough.

Ann. Now Martin's here, can he no' take a look at the range? Susan canna get the oven to go.

Janet [to *Ann*]. The oven's all right.

Rutherford [with a complete change of voice and manner]. Now what's that got to do with Martin?

Ann [subsiding]. He could tell Baines to send up a man i' the mornin'.

Rutherford. That's not Martin's business — you must send word to Baines himself.

Martin. I could easy take a look at it while I'm here, sir. It 'ud save you sending.

Rutherford [wearily]. Oh, all right. If you want a job.

Ann. Janet, go and show Martin. [*Martin turns at the door and looks for her to pass out before him.*]

Janet [standing motionless]. Susan can show him. [*Martin goes, closing the door.*]

Rutherford. Any letters?

Ann [flurried]. Yes. They're somewheres. Janet —

Rutherford [with the sudden irritation of a tired man]. Bless me, can't I have a simple thing like that done for me? How often have I said to put them in one place and stick to it? [*Janet discovers the letters on the small table by the door and brings them to him. He sits on the settle and stretches out his legs.*] Here, take them off for

me. I'm dead beat. [*After a moment's silent revolt she kneels and begins to unlace his boots. He looks at her bent sullen face.*] Ah! sulky, are ye? [*She makes no answer.*] 'Ud like to tell me to take them off myself, I dare say. And I been working the day long for you. [*Getting irritated at her touch.*] Spoilt — that's what you are, my lass. [*Opening a letter.*] What's this? A polite letter from the vicar, eh? Damn polite — a new organ — that's his trouble — thinks I'd like to help pay for it. [*He throws it across the hearthrug to John.*] There's a job for you — you're idle enough. Write and tell His Reverence to go to the devil and ask him for an organ. Or mebbe Richard'll like to do it, as he's his curate. [*To Janet.*] Let be, let be. [*He takes his boots off painfully one with the other.*]

Ann [*plaintively*]. I'm sure the vicar came in pleasant enough not a week gone, and asked for 'ee ——

Rutherford. Asked for my money, you mean. They're civil enough when they want anything, the lot of them. [*To Janet — sarcastically, as she carries the boots away.*] Thank 'ee kindly. [*He gets up and puts his slippers on. Ann speaks in a flurried whisper to John.*]

Ann. John, you've got your father's chair.

John [*gets up*]. Sorry.

Rutherford [*drags the chair up to the table, and*

sits down as if he were tired out. He looks at John with a curiously interested expression as he lounges across]. Feeling better?

John [uneasy and consequently rather swaggering]. Oh, I'm still a bit shaky about the knees.

Rutherford. You'll be coming back to work, I suppose. There's plenty to be done. How's the little lad?

John. I don't know — all right, I suppose. Isn't he, Mary?

Mary. Mr. Rutherford asked you.

John. But I don't know. [Rutherford looks at Mary, she at him; there is a pause.]

Rutherford [busy with his letters]. I thought Gibson had forbidden you to smoke? [John rebels for a moment, then throws his cigarette into the fire, with an action like a petted child.]

John. I must do something.

Rutherford. What have you been busy with to-day? . . . This — metal o' yours? Eh?

John [evasively]. Aunt Ann's been talking about it.

Ann [meaning well]. We've joost been saying how it'll all come right now — all the bother. John'll do it — Rutherfords' 'll be itself again.

Rutherford. Martin tells me you've hit on a good thing — a big thing. . . . I've got to hear more about it, eh?

John. If you like.

Rutherford. What's that? [He looks up

slowly under his eyebrows — a long curious look, as if he saw the first possibility of opposition.]

John [going over to the fire-place]. Can't we have dinner?

Ann. You're getting back your appetite. That's a good sign.

Rutherford. Dinner can wait. [*He sweeps a space clear on the table and puts his letters down. Janet presently sits down resigned to a family row. Mary listens throughout intently, her eyes constantly fixed on John.*] I'm a business man, and I like to know how I stand. [*Launching at John.*] Now — what d'ye mean?

John. I don't understand you, sir.

Rutherford. What's there to understand?

John [*his manner gradually slipping into that of a child afraid of its father.*] Well, I've been away from the Works for two months. Before we begin to talk about the other thing, I'd like to know what's doing.

Rutherford. What's that got to do with it? You never have known what's doing.

John. I think I ought to be told — now.

Rutherford. Now! That's it, is it? You want a bone flung to your dignity! Well, here it is. Things are bad.

John. Really bad?

Rutherford. For the present. These colliery strikes one on top of another, for one thing. Rayner's drew the ponies out of the pit this afternoon.

John. It'll about smash them, won't it?

Rutherford. Mebbe. The question is how it affects us.

John. Oh! We get coal from them?

Rutherford. I should have thought you'd ha' picked up that much — in five years.

John. Stoking isn't my business.

Rutherford. You might have noticed the name on the trucks — you see it every day of your life. Well, yes — we get our coal from them. . . . What then?

John. Well — what's going to happen? How bad is it?

Rutherford. I said — bad for the present. The balance-sheet for the year's just been drawn up and shows a loss of four thousand on last year's working. It's not a big loss, considering what's been against us — those Americans dumping all that stuff in the spring — we had to stop that little game, and it cost us something to do it. Then the price of materials has gone up, there's a difference there. [*Irritably, answering his own thoughts.*] It's not ruin, bless us — it's simply a question of work and sticking together; but the Bank's rather more difficult to manage than usual. There's not one of 'em would sacrifice a shilling of their own to keep the old place going — they want their fees reg'lar. That's their idea of the commercial enterprise they're always talking about.

It's the pulse they keep their finger on — when it misses a beat, they come crowding round with their hands up like a lot of damned old women. . . . Well, well! Something's wanted to pull things together. . . . Now — this idea of yours. Martin tells me it's worth something.

John [nettled]. Worth something? It's worth thousands a year to any one who works it properly.

Rutherford [with his half smile]. Thousands! That's a fair margin. [*Drily.*] What's your calculation in figures?

John. That depends on the scale it's worked on.

Rutherford [as to a child]. Yes — so I supposed. What's your preliminary cost?

John [getting nervous]. Nothing — as far as I know. I can't say for certain — something like that.

Rutherford. Something like nothing; and on something like nothing you're going to show a profit of thousands a year on a single metal. [*Drily.*] Sounds like a beautiful dream, doesn't it? About your cost of working now — that should run you into something?

John [who is getting annoyed]. Thirty per cent. less than what you're working at now.

Rutherford. Indeed. . . . May I ask where and how you've carried out your experiments?

John [*uneasily*]. I didn't mention it to you. A year ago I got a muffle furnace. I've worked with it from time to time, in the old pot-loft.

Rutherford. Paid for it by any chance?

John. Not yet.

Rutherford. How did you manage for coals now?

John. I — took what I wanted from the heap.

Rutherford. Ah, and your materials — I suppose you took what you wanted of those too? Well, I've no objection, if you can make it good. [*Suddenly.*] What's your receipt?

John. I haven't — I'm not prepared to say. [*There is a silence. Ann lowers her knitting with an alarmed look.*]

Rutherford [*heavily*]. A week or two ago in this room you told me it was perfected — ready for working to-morrow.

John. Yes — I told you so.

Rutherford [*suppressed*]. What d'ye mean? . . . Come, come, sir — I'm your father, I want an answer to my question — a plain answer, if you can give one.

John [*in a high-pitched, nervous voice*]. I — I'm a business man, and I want to know where I stand. [*Rutherford breaks into a laugh*]. Oh, you turn me into an impudent school-boy, but I'm not. I'm a man, with a thing in my mind worth a fortune.

Ann. John! [*Asserting her authority.*] You must tell your father.

John [*very excited*]. I shan't tell him till I've taken out my patent, so there. [*There is a pause — Rutherford stares at his son.*]

Rutherford [*heavily*]. What d'ye mean?

John. I mean what I say. I want my price.

Rutherford. Your price — your price? [*Bringing his fist down on the table.*] Damn your impudence, sir. A whippersnapper like you to talk about your price.

John [*losing his temper*]. I'm not a whippersnapper. I've got something to sell and you want to buy it, and there's an end.

Rutherford. To buy? To sell? 'And this to your father?

John. To any man who wants what I've made. [*There is a dead silence on this, broken only by an involuntary nervous movement from the rest of the family. Then Rutherford speaks without moving.*]

Rutherford. Ah! So that's your line, is it? . . . This is what I get for all I've done for you. . . . This is the result of the schooling I give you.

John [*with an attempt at a swagger*]. I suppose you mean Harrow.

Rutherford. It was two hundred pound — that's what I mean.

John. And you gave me a year of it!

Rutherford. And a lot of good you've got of it. . . . What ha' you done with it? Idled your time away wi' your books o' poetry when you should ha' been working. Married a wife who bears you a bairn you can't keep. [*At a movement from Mary.*] Aye — hard words mebbe. What will you do for your son when the time comes? I've toiled and sweated to give you a name you'd be proud to own — worked early and late, toiled like a dog when other men were taking their ease — plotted and planned to get my chance, taken it and held it when it come till I could ha' burst with the struggle. Sell! You talk o' selling to me, when everything you'll ever make couldn't pay back the life I've given to you!

John. Oh, I know, I know.

Ann. You mustn't answer your father, John.

John. Well, after all, I didn't ask to be born.

Rutherford. Nor did the little lad, God help him.

John [*rapidly*]. Look here, father — why did you send me to Harrow?

Rutherford. Why? To make a gentleman of you, and because I thought they'd teach you better than the Grammar School. I was mistaken.

John. They don't turn out good clerks and office boys.

Rutherford. What's that?

John. I've been both for five years. Only I've had no salary.

Rutherford. You've been put to learn your business like any other young fellow. I began at the bottom — you've got to do the same. There'll not be two masters at Rutherfords' while I'm on my legs.

John. That's it, that's it. You make a servant of me.

Rutherford. What do you suppose your work's worth to Rutherfords'? Tell me that.

John. What's that matter now? I've done with it. I've found a way out.

Rutherford. A way out — of what?

John [*rather taken aback*]. Well — you don't suppose I'd choose to live here all my life?

Ann [*taking it personally*]. And why not, pray?

Rutherford. Your father has lived here, and your grandfather before you. It's your inheritance — can't you realise that? — what you've got to come to when I'm under ground. We've made it for you, stone by stone, penny by penny, fighting through thick and thin for close on a hundred years.

John. Well, after all, I can't help what you and grandfather chose to do.

Rutherford. Chose to do! There's no chose to do. The thing's there. You're my son — my son that's got to come after me.

John. Oh, it's useless. Our ideas of life are utterly different.

Rutherford. Ideas of life! What do you know about life?

John. Oh, nothing, of course.

Rutherford. If you did, you'd soon stop having ideas about it. Life! I've had nigh on sixty years of it, and I'll tell you. Life's work — keeping your head up and your heels down. Sleep, and begetting children, rearing them up to work when you're gone — that's life. And when you know better than the God who made you, you can begin to ask what you're going to get by it. And you'll get more work and six foot of earth at the end of it.

John. And that's what you mean me to do, is it?

Rutherford. It's what you've got to do — or starve. You're my son — you've got to come after me.

John. Look here, father. You tell me all this. Just try and see things my way for once. Take the Works. I know you've done it all, built it up, and all that — and you're quite right to be proud of it. But I — I don't like the place, that's the long and the short of it. It's not worth my while. After all, I've got myself to think of — my own life. If I'd done that sooner, by Jove! I'd have been a jolly sight better off. I'd not have married, for one thing. [*With a glance at Mary.*]

Not that I regret that. You talk about what you did when you were young. You've told me the sort of time you've had — nothing but grind, grind, since the time you could do anything. And what have you got by it? What have you got? I have myself to think of. I want a run for my money — your money, I suppose it is — other fellows do. And I've made this thing myself, off my own bat — and — and — [*ending lamely*].— I don't see why I shouldn't have a look in. . . . On my own account. . . . [*There is an uncomfortable silence.*]

Rutherford [*in a new tone*]. You're going to take out a patent, you say?

John [*taking this as friendly*]. Yes.

Rutherford. Know anything about Patent Law?

John. Well, no — not yet.

Rutherford. It's very simple, and wonderfully cheap — three pound for three years. At the end of three years, you can always extend the time if you want to — no difficulty about that.

John. Oh, no.

Rutherford. But you can't patent a metal.

John. I don't see why not.

Rutherford. What's the use if you do?

John. It's the same as anything else. I take out a patent for a certain receipt, and I can come down on any one who uses it.

Rutherford. And prove that they've used it?

John. They have to find out what it is first. It's not likely I'm going to give the show away.
[Pause.]

Rutherford. But you want to sell, you say.

John. Yes.

Rutherford. How are you going to do that without giving it away? . . . Suppose you go to one of the big chaps — Miles of Cardiff, for example. "Here you are," you say. "I've got an idea worth a fortune. Give me a fortune and I'll tell you what it is." He's not going to buy a pig in a poke any more than I am. People have a way of thinking they're going to make their fortunes, d'ye see? but those people aren't generally the sort you let loose in your glass-house.

John. Of course, I shall make inquiries about all that. I can't say till I know.

Rutherford. Do you remember a little thing of mine — an invention you would call it. Did ye ever happen to see it?

John. Yes. Martin showed it to me once.

Rutherford. What's your opinion of that now — as a business man?

John. Of course, it had the makings of a good thing — any one could see that.

Rutherford. Nobody did. I was nineteen at the time — a lad. Like you, I hadn't the money to run it myself. Clinton, the American people, got hold of the idea, and sold seven hundred thousand of it the first six months in New York alone.

[*He gets up and addresses the room, generally.*]
Dinner in ten minutes.

John. Surely you could have got some one to take it up — an obvious thing like that?

Rutherford [*drily*]. That's how it worked out in my case. [*He moves slowly to the door.*]

John. You don't believe I can do what I say.

Rutherford. I can't tell — nor can you.

John [*high-handed*]. Oh, very well then. What are we talking about?

Rutherford. You undertake to produce ordinary white metal at a third of the usual cost — that's it, isn't it? You've worked this out in a muffle furnace. My experience of muffle furnaces is that they're excellent for experimenting in a very small way. A child can hit on an idea for a metal — provided he's materials at his command, and knows a bit about chemistry. But no man living can estimate the cost of that idea until it's worked out on a big scale. Your receipt, as it stands, isn't worth the paper it's written on. [*As Rutherford moves again towards the door John makes a movement to stop him.*]

John. Father, look here. Here's an offer.

Rutherford. Thank you kindly.

John. If you'll let me have a pot in one of the big furnaces for a trial — I swear to you, on my honour, I'll let you see the result without touching it, after I've put in the materials. You can clay the pots up — seal them, if you like. Let me do

it to-morrow; I can't stand hanging on like this.

Rutherford. To-morrow! Impossible.

John. Why not?

Rutherford. You can't come down to the Works in this weather. You'd catch cold, and be laid up again.

John. The day after then — next week — or, why not? — let Martin do it.

Rutherford. Martin? [*He turns to look at John, struck by a new thought.*]

John. Why not? He can do it as well as I can.

Rutherford. Martin? . . . He knows then?

John [*surprised*]. Why, he talked to you about it, didn't he?

Rutherford. Yes, yes. But — he's got the receipt?

John. Yes — there's no difficulty at all. Let him mix the metal and clay her up, and you can open her yourself. Then you'll see. You'll take Martin's word for it, I suppose? Only, for Heaven's sake, give me a fair chance.

Rutherford [*moving suddenly*]. Fair chance be damned, sir. You've said your say, and I've said mine. Think it over! [*He goes out, leaving John standing staring after him.*]

John [*under his breath as the door closes*]. Oh, go to the devil!

Ann. For shame to speak so. Just let him hear you. And there, dinner'll be as dry as a

bone, and I've waited so long I don't feel as if I could touch a morsel. You might keep your business till we'd had something to eat, I think. [*She hurries out.*]

Janet [*with a sort of admiration*]. Now you've done it.

John. Done it! I've jolly well let him know what I think — and high time, too. [*Brokenly.*] It isn't fair — it isn't fair. Old bully. What am I going to do?

Janet [*dropping into her usual tone*]. What you've always done, I suppose.

John. What's that?

Janet. Say you're sorry. It's the soonest way back.

John. I'm not going back. Sooner than give in, I'll starve. I don't care. I'll go to London, Canada, anywhere. He shan't have me, to grind the life out of me by inches — and he shan't have my metal. If he thinks he's going to pick my brains and give me nothing for it, he'll find himself jolly well mistaken. I don't care. Once and for all, I'm going to make a stand. And he can jolly well go to the devil. [*Mary speaks for the first time, in a low voice.*]

Mary. What are you making a stand for?

John [*stopping to look at her.*] Good Lord! Mary, haven't you been listening?

Mary. Yes, I've been listening. You said you wanted your price. What is your price?

Janet. All the profits and none of the work — that's John's style. [*She sits on the settle, her chin on her hands.*]

John. A lot you know about it. [*Mary speaks again.*]

Mary. If you get your price, what will you do with it?

Janet. He won't get it.

John [*to Janet*]. Do you suppose I'm going to sit down under his bullying?

Janet. You've done it all your life.

John. Well, here's an end of it then.

Janet. No one ever stands out against father for long — you know that — or else they get so knocked about, they don't matter any more. [*She looks at Mary, who has made an involuntary movement.*] Oh, I don't mean he hits them — that's not his way.

John. Oh, don't exaggerate.

Janet. Exaggerate — look at mother! You were too young — I remember — [*To Mary.*] You've been here nigh on three months. If you think you're going to change this house, with your soft ways, you're mistaken. Nothing'll change us now — nothing. We're made that way — set — and we've got to live that way. [*Slowly.*] You think you can make John do something. If ever he does it'll be for fear of father, not for love of you.

John. What do you mean? [*In a high voice.*]
If you think I'm going to give in ——

Janet. You've said that three times. I know
you're going to give in.

John. Well, I'm not — so there.

Janet. What will you do then?

John. That's my business. Curse Ruther-
fords'! Curse it!

Janet [*to Mary*]. That's what he'll do.
That's what he's been doing these five years.
And what's come of it? He's dragged you into
the life here — and Tony — that's all. . . . I
knew all the time you'd have to come in the end,
to go under, like the rest of us.

Mary [*quickly*]. No, no ——

Janet. Who's going to get you out of it?
. . . John? . . . You're all getting ex-
cited about this metal. I don't know whether it's
good or bad, but, anyway, it doesn't count. In a
few days John'll make another row for us to sit
round and listen to. In a few days more he'll
threaten father to run away. He can't, because
he's nothing separate from father. When he gives
up his receipt, or whatever it is, it'll go to help
Rutherfords' — not you or me or any one, just
Rutherfords'. And after a bit he'll forget about
it — let it slide. Like the rest of us — we've all
wanted things, one way and another, and we've let
them slide. It's no good standing up against
father.

John. Oh, who listens to you? Come along, Mary [*moving to the door*]. Disagreeable old maid! [*He goes out. Mary stands in the same place looking at Janet.*]

Mary. Oh, Janet, no-one's any right to be what he is — no-one's any right.

John [*calling from the hall*]. Mollie! I want you. [*Irritably.*] Mollie!

Mary. Coming! [*She follows him. Janet remains in the same attitude — her chin on her hands, staring sullenly before her. Suddenly she bows her face in her arms and begins to cry. Martin comes in from the kitchen on his way out. As he reaches the door leading to the hall, he sees her and stops.*]

Martin [*in a whisper*]. My lass! [*She starts and gets up quickly.*]

Janet. Martin! Martin! [*He blunders over to her and takes her in his arms with a rough movement, holding her to him — kisses her with passion and without tenderness, and releases her suddenly. She goes to the fireplace, and leans her arms on the mantelpiece, her head on them — he turns away with his head bent. They stand so.*]

Martin [*as if the words were dragged from him*]. Saturd'y night — he's away to Wickham — at the Tarn. . . . Will ye come?

Janet. Yes. [*Martin goes to the door at back. As he reaches it John Rutherford comes into the room with some papers in his hand. In*

crossing between the two, he stops suddenly as if some thought had struck him.]

Martin. Good night, sir.

Rutherford. Good night. [*He stands looking at Janet till the outer door shuts.*] Why don't you say good night to Martin? It 'ud be more civil — wouldn't it?

Janet. I have said it. [*Their eyes meet for a moment — she moves quickly to the door.*] I'll tell Susan you're ready. [*Rutherford is left alone. He stands in the middle of the room with his papers in his hand — motionless, save that he turns his head slowly to look at the door by which Martin has gone out.*]

ACT II

It is about nine o'clock in the evening. The lamp is burning on the large table. Bedroom candlesticks are on the small table between the window and door.

John Rutherford is sitting at his desk. He has been writing, and now sits staring in front of him with a heavy brooding face. He does not hear Dick as he comes in quietly and goes to the table to light his candle — then changes his mind, looks at his father, and comes to the fire to warm his hands. He looks as usual, pale and tired. Rutherford becomes suddenly aware of his presence, upon which Dick speaks in a gentle, nervous tone.

Dick. I should rather like to speak to you, if you could spare me a minute.

Rutherford. What's the matter with you?

Dick. The matter?

Rutherford. You're all wanting to speak to me nowadays — what's wrong with things? . . .
[*Taking up his pen.*] What's the bee in your bonnet?

Dick [*announcing his news*]. I have been offered the senior curacy at St. Jude's, Southport.

Rutherford. Well — have you taken it?

Dick [*disappointed*]. I could not do so without your consent. That's what I want to speak to you about — if you could spare me a minute.

Rutherford [*realising*]. Ah! that means you're giving up your job here?

Dick. Exactly.

Rutherford. Ah. . . . Just as well, I daresay.

Dick. You will naturally want to know my reasons for such a step. [*He waits for a reply and gets none.*] In the first place, I have to consider my future. From that point of view there seems to be a chance of — of more success. And lately — I have had it in my mind for some time past — somehow my work among the people here hasn't met with the response I once hoped for. . . . I have done my best — and it would be ungrateful to say that I had failed utterly when there are always the few who are pleased when I drop in. . . . But the men are not encouraging.

Rutherford. I daresay not.

Dick. I have done my best. Looking back on my three years here, I honestly cannot blame myself; and yet — failure is not the less bitter on that account.

Rutherford [*almost kindly*]. Well — perhaps a year or two at a Theological College wasn't the best of trainings for a raw hell like Grantley. It always beats me — whenever a man thinks it's his

particular line to deal with humanity in the rough, he always goes to school like a bit of a lad — to find out how to do it.

Dick. Ah! you don't understand.

Rutherford. You mean I don't see things your way — well, that's not worth discussing. [*He goes back to his writing.*]

Dick. I have sometimes wondered if your not seeing things my way has had anything to do with my lack of success among your people. For they are your people.

Rutherford. What d'ye mean?

Dick [*sincerely*]. Not only the lack of religious example on your part — even some kind of Sunday observance would have helped — to be more in touch — but all through my ministry I have been conscious of your silent antagonism. Even in my active work — in talking to the men, in visiting their wives, in everything — I have always felt that dead weight against me, dragging me down, taking the heart out of all I do and say, even when I am most certain that I am right to do and say it. [*He ends rather breathlessly.*]

Rutherford [*testily*]. What the devil have you got hold of now?

Dick. Perhaps I haven't made it clear what I mean.

Rutherford [*deliberately*]. I've never said a word against you or for you. And I've never heard a word against you or for you. Now!

. . . As for what you call your work, I don't know any more about it than a bairn, and I haven't time to learn. I should say that if you could keep the men out of the public houses and hammer a little decency into the women it might be a good thing. But I'm not an expert in your line.

Dick [*bold in his conviction*]. Father — excuse me, but sometimes I think your point of view is perfectly deplorable.

Rutherford. Indeed. Frankly, I don't realise the importance of my point of view or of yours either. I got my work to do in the world — for the sake o' the argument, so have you — we do it or we don't do it. But what we think about it either way, doesn't matter.

Dick [*very earnestly*]. It matters to God.

Rutherford. Does it? — Now run along — I'm busy.

Dick. This is all part of your resentment — your natural resentment — at my having taken up a different line to the one you intended for me.

Rutherford. Resentment — not a bit. Wear your collar-stud at the back if you like, it's all one to me. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear — you were no good for my purpose, and there's an end. For the matter o' that, you might just as well never ha' been born — except that you give no trouble either way. . . . Where's John?

Dick. I don't know. His candle is here.

. . . I am still absolutely convinced that I chose the better part.

Rutherford. Probably. There are more ways than one of shirking life, and religion's one of them. If you want my blessing, here it is. As long as you respect my name and remember that I made a gentleman of ye, ye can go to the devil in your own way.

Dick. Then I have your consent to accept St. Jude's?

Rutherford [*writing*]. Aye. Just ring the bell before you go. I want my lamp. [*Dick does so, depressed and disappointed. On his way to his candle he hesitates.*]

Dick. By the way — I'm forgetting — Mrs. Henderson wants to see you.

Rutherford. And who's Mrs. Henderson?

Dick. William's mother.

Rutherford. William? . . . The chap who's been pilfering my money? Oh, that matter's settled.

Dick. Oh! . . . Yes.

Rutherford. Good night. Did you ring?

Dick. Yes. I rang. Good night. [*There is a silence, broken by the scratching of Rutherford's pen. Dick summons up his courage and speaks again.*] I'm afraid I told Mrs. Henderson she might call to-night.

Rutherford. Did ye now?

Dick. Yes.

Rutherford. And what the devil did ye do that for, if one may inquire?

Dick. She is one of my parishioners — in my district. She came to me — asked my help.

Rutherford. Told you the usual yarn, I suppose. More fool you, to be taken in by it. I can't see her.

Dick. We don't know that it isn't true. The boy has been led astray by bad companions to bet and gamble. It's a regular gang — George Hammond's one, Fade's another.

Rutherford. I know them. Two of the worst characters and the best workers we've got.

Dick. However that may be, the mother's in great grief, and I promised to intercede with you to give her son another chance.

Rutherford. Then you'd no business to promise anything of the kind. The lad's a young black-guard. Bless my soul — look at the head he's got on him! As bad an egg as you'll find in all your parish, and that's saying a good deal.

Dick. I'm afraid it is — God help them. But ——— [*A series of slow heavy knocks on the outer door are heard, ending with a belated single one.*] I'm afraid that is Mrs. Henderson.

Rutherford [*going on with his writing*]. Aye, it sounds like her hand. Been drowning her trouble, mebbe.

Dick [*after another knock*]. Well. She's here.

Rutherford. You'd better go and tell her to go away again.

Dick. Yes. [*He makes an undecided move towards the door; stops.*] The woman ought to have a fair hearing.

Rutherford [*losing patience*]. Fair hearing! She's badgered Martin till he's had to turn out, and on the top of it all you come blundering in with your talk of a fair hearing — [*he gets up and swings to the door, pushing Dick aside*]. Here — let be.

Dick [*speaking with such earnestness that Rutherford stops to look at him*]. Father — one moment. . . . Don't you think — don't you think it might be better to be friendly with her. To avoid unpleasantness? And gossip afterwards —

Rutherford. What? God help you for a fool, Richard. One would think I'd nothing to do but fash myself about this young blackguard and speak soft to his mother — [*he goes out into the hall and is heard opening the door*]. Now, Mrs. Henderson — you've come about your lad. You've had my answer. [*Mrs. Henderson is heard speaking apparently on the mat.*]

Mrs. Henderson. Oh, if you please, sir — if you could just see your way to sparin' me a minute I'd take it kindly, that I would. And I come all the way from home on me two feet — and me a poor widder woman. [*She drifts imperceptibly*

just inside the room. She is a large and powerful woman with a draggled skirt and a shawl over her head, and she is slightly drunk. Rutherford follows her in and stands by the open door, holding the handle.]

Rutherford. Well, then, out with it. What ha' ye got to say?

Mrs. Henderson. It's my lad Bill as has been accused o' takin' your money ——

Rutherford. Ten pounds.

Mrs. Henderson. By Mr. Martin, sir.

Rutherford. What then?

Mrs. Henderson. And not another living soul near to say the truth of it.

Rutherford. Martin's my man, Mrs. Henderson. What he does, he does under my orders. Besides, Martin and your son both say he took it. They've agreed about it.

Mrs. Henderson. Aye, when he was scared out of his life he owned to it. I'm not denying he owned to it ——

Rutherford. Oh, that's it, is it? He wants to go back on it? Why did he give up the money?

Mrs. Henderson. He was that scared, sir, o' being sent to the gaol and losing his place and all, what wi' Mr. Martin speaking that harsh to him and all, and him a bit of a lad ——

Rutherford. I see. In that case I owe him ten pounds?

Mrs. Henderson. Eh?

Rutherford. I've took ten pounds off him, poor lad, all his honest savings mebbe. Good night, Mrs. Henderson.

Mrs. Henderson. Ah, Mr. Rutherford, sir, don't 'ee be hard on us — don't 'ee now. We all got summat to be overlooked — every one on us when ye get down to it — and there's not a family harder working nor more respected in Grantley. Mr. Richard here'll speak for us.

Dick. I . . . I do believe they are sincerely trying to do better.

Rutherford. Just so — better not rake up by-gones. My time's short, Mrs. Henderson, and you've no business to come up to the house at this time o' night, as you know well enough.

Mrs. Henderson. Aye, sir, begging your pardon. I'm sure I'd be the last to intrude on you and the family if it warn't for —

Rutherford. I daresay. What did Martin say to you when you intruded into the glass-house?

Mrs. Henderson. What did he say to me?

Rutherford [*impatiently*]. Aye.

Mrs. Henderson [*fervently*]. Far be it from me to repeat what he did say. God forbid that I should dirty my mouth wi' the words that man turned on me! before the men too, and half of 'em wi' their shirts off and me a decent woman. [*Violently.*] “Hawd yer whist,” I says to 'n. “Hawd yer whist for a shameless —”

Rutherford. That'll do, that'll do — that's

enough. You can take what Martin said from me. The matter's ended. [*Dick makes an appealing movement.*] Five years ago your son was caught stealing coppers out o' the men's coats — men poorer than himself. Don't forget that. I knew about it well enough. I gave him another chance because he was a young 'un, and because you ought to ha' taught him better.

Mrs. Henderson. Me? Taught him better! That I should ever hear the like!

Rutherford. I gave him another chance. He made the most of it by robbing me the first time he thought he was safe not to be caught. Every man's got a right to go to the devil in his own way, as I've just been telling Mr. Richard here, and your son Bill's old enough to choose his. I don't quarrel with him for that. But lads that get their fingers in my till are no use to me. And there's an end!

Dick. Father! If you talk to her like this —

Rutherford. It's you that's brought her to hear me — you must take the consequences.

Dick. No one is wholly bad — we have no right to say the lad is past hope, to condemn him utterly.

Mrs. Henderson. Thank 'ee kindly, Mr. Richard, sir — it's gospel truth every word of it. My son's as good a son as ever a lone woman had, but he's the spittin' image of his father, that easily

led. And now to have him go wrong and all through keeping bad company and betting on the racing — just as he might ha' laid a bit on you, sir, in your young days and won his money too, sir, along o' your being sartain sure to win.

Rutherford. Well, I would have done my best to get him his money. But if I'd lost he'd ha' had to take his beating and pay up like a man and no whining about it. You take an interest in running?

Mrs. Henderson [*fervently*]. Aye, sir, and always has done ever since I was a bit lass. And many's the Saturday me and my old man's gone down to the ground to see you run.

Rutherford. You don't happen to have heard who's won the quarter-of-a-mile at Broughton, do you?

Dick. Father!

Mrs. Henderson. I did hear as it was Dawson, sir, as I was passing.

Rutherford. Ah. Shepherd was overtrained. What time did he do — Dawson?

Mrs. Henderson. I don't know, sir.

Rutherford. I made him a shade worse than six under at his trial. Shepherd should have beaten that.

Dick. Father, please! Do let us talk this matter out seriously.

Rutherford. Seriously? What more?

Dick. You see, it is as I said. I am sure Mrs.

Henderson will answer for her son's good conduct if you will consent to take him back — won't you, Mrs. Henderson? Just this once. Your kindness may make all the difference, reform him altogether, who knows? He's had his lesson and I hate to preach, but — there is such a thing as repentance.

Rutherford [drily]. That's all right. You say what you think! And don't misunderstand me. I've no objection to Bill Henderson repenting, but I won't have him doing it in my Works, d'ye see? There's nothing spreads so quick as a nice soft feeling like that, and — who knows — we might have half-a-dozen other young black-legs at the same game? Now, Mrs. Henderson, go home like a sensible woman and send your lad away from Grantley. He'll soon find his feet if he's a mind to go straight. Keep him clear o' the pit towns — put him on a farm somewhere, where there aren't so many drinks going. And if I were you [*looking at her*], why not go with him yourself?

Mrs. Henderson [after a pause, suddenly truculent]. Me? Me leave Grantley? Me go to a place where I'm not respected and not a friend to speak for me? In Grantley I was born and in Grantley I'll live, like yourself. And beggin' your pardon, though you are the master, I'll joost take the liberty o' choosin' my own way.

Rutherford. Quite right — quite right. When you've lived and had your bairns and got drunk

in a place you're apt to get attached to it. I'm that way myself. But it's just as well to change your drinks once in a while. It's only a friendly word of advice I'm giving you. Take it or leave it.

Mrs. Henderson [bridling]. And so I will take it or leave it. Much obliged to 'ee.

Rutherford. And now go home, like a good woman.

Mrs. Henderson [tossing her head with an unsteady curtsy]. And so I will, and a lot I got for my trouble — thank 'ee for nothing.

Rutherford. Thank me for not prosecuting your son, as I might ha' done.

Mrs. Henderson [working herself up]. Prosecute! Prosecute my son! And why didn't ye do it? Ye darena'—that's why. You're feared o' folks talkin'—o' things said i' the court. And ye took and hided him and him a bit of a lad, and not a decent woman in Grantley but's crying shame on ye!

Rutherford [good-humouredly]. Now, Richard, this is where you come in. You brought her here.

Mrs. Henderson [very shrill]. You let him off easy, did you? You give him another chance, did you? My lad could ha' had you up for assault — that's what he'd ha' done if he'd had a mind, and quite right too. It's him that's let you off, mind that. And you may thank your devil's luck

you're not up afore the magistrate this next Assizes that ever is, and printed in the paper for all the countryside to mock at.

Rutherford. Go on, Richard. She's your parishioner. Turn her out.

Mrs. Henderson. Him turn me out? 'A bit of a preaching bairn no stronger nor a linty — him with his good noos and his sojers-o'-Christ-arise! Whee was it up and ran away from old Lizzie Winter like a dawg wi' a kettle tied to his tail?

Rutherford. We'll have all your secrets in a minute — [*quietly without turning*]. Are you going, Mrs. Henderson?

Mrs. Henderson. I'll go when it pleases me, and not afore!

Rutherford. Are you going —— [*He gets up and moves towards her in a threatening manner.*]

Mrs. Henderson [*retreating*]. Lay hands on me! Lay hands on a helpless woman! I'll larn ye! I'll larn ye to come on me wi' yer high ways. Folks shall hear tell on it, that they shall, and a bit more besides. I'll larn ye, sure as I'm a living creature. . . . I'll set the police on ye, as sure as I'm a living woman. . . .

Rutherford [*to Dick, contemptuously*]. Hark to that — Hark to it.

Mrs. Henderson. You think yourself so grand wi' your big hoose, and your high ways. And your grandfather a potman like my own. You

wi' your son that's the laughing stock o' the parish, and your daughter that goes wi' a working man ahint your back! And so good night to 'ee. [*The outer door bangs violently. There is a pause. Dick speaks in a voice scarcely audible.*]

Dick. What was that? . . . She said something — about Janet.

Rutherford [*impatiently*]. Good God, man — don't stand staring there as if the house had fallen.

Dick [*shaking*]. I told you to be careful — I warned you — I knew how it would be.

Rutherford. Warned me? You're fool enough to listen to what a drunken drab like that says!

Dick. She's not the only one ——

Rutherford [*looking at him*]. What d'ye mean? What's that?

Dick. People are talking. I've — heard things. . . . It isn't true — it can't be — it's too dreadful.

Rutherford. Heard things — what ha' ye heard?

Dick. It isn't true.

Rutherford. Out with it.

Dick. Lizzie Winter that time — called out something. I took no notice, of course. . . . Three nights ago as I was coming home — past a public house — the men were talking. I heard something then.

Rutherford. What was it you heard?

Dick. There was his name, and Janet's. Then

one of them — George Hammond, I think it was — said something about having seen him on the road to the Tarn late one evening with a woman with a shawl over her head — Martin!

Rutherford. Martin!

Dick [*trying to reassure himself*]. It's extremely unlikely that there is any truth in it at all. Why, he's been about ever since we were children. A servant, really. No one's ever thought of the possibility of such a thing. They will gossip, and one thing leads to another. It's easy to put two and two together and make five of them. That's all it is, we'll find. Why, even I can recall things I barely noticed at the time — things that might point to its being true — if it weren't so utterly impossible.

Rutherford [*hoarsely*]. Three nights gone. In this very room —

Dick. What? [*running on again*]. They've seen some one like Janet, and started the talk. It would be enough.

Rutherford [*speaking to himself*]. Under my roof —

Dick. After dark on the road with a shawl — all women would look exactly alike. . . . It's a pity he's taken the Tarn Cottage.

Rutherford [*listening again*]. Eh?

Dick. I mean it's a pity it's happened just now.

Rutherford. A good mile from the Works.

Dick. You can't see it from the village.

Rutherford. A good mile to walk, morn and night.

Dick. No one goes there.

Rutherford. A lone place — a secret, he says to himself. Martin . . . [*He stands by the table, his shoulders stooped, his face suddenly old. Dick makes an involuntary movement towards him.*]

Dick. Father! Don't take it like that, for heaven's sake — don't look so broken.

Rutherford. Who's broken . . . [*he makes a sign to Dick not to come near*]. Him to go against me. You're only a lad — you don't know. You don't know. [*John comes into the room, evidently on his way to bed.*]

John [*idly*]. Hullo. [*Stops short, looking from one to the other.*] What's the matter?

Rutherford [*turning on him.*] And what the devil do you want?

John. Want? — nothing . . . I thought you were talking about me, that's all.

Rutherford. About you, damn you — go to bed, the pair o' ye.

Dick. Father —

Rutherford. Go to bed. There's men's work to be done here — you're best out o' the way — [*he goes to his desk and speaks down the tube*]. Hulloh there — Hulloh!

Dick. Wouldn't it be better to wait to talk

things over? Here's John — you may be able to settle something — come to some arrangement.

Rutherford. Who's that? Gray — Has Martin gone home? Martin! Tell him to come across at once — I want him. Aye — to the house — where else? Have you got it? Tell him at once.

John [*suspicious*]. I rather want a word with Martin myself. I think I'll stay.

Rutherford. You'll do as you're bid.

John. What do you want Martin for at this time of night?

Rutherford. That's my business.

John. About my metal —

Rutherford. Your metal! What the devil's your metal got to do with it? [*Breaks off.*]

John [*excited*]. Martin's got it. You know that. You're sending for him. Martin's honest — he won't tell you.

Dick. Here's Janet. [*Janet has come in in answer to the bell and stands by the door sullen and indifferent, waiting for orders.*]

Janet. Susan's gone to bed — [*as the silence continues she looks round*]. The bell rang.

Dick [*looking at Rutherford*]. Some time ago. The lamp — father wanted his lamp. [*She goes out.*]

John [*rapidly*]. It's no use going on like this, settling nothing either way. Sooner or later we've got to come to an understanding. . . . [*Dick*

makes a movement to stop him.] Oh, shut up, Dick! [*He breaks off at a look from Rutherford.*]

Rutherford. I want to have it clear. You heard what I said, three days past?

John. Yes, of course.

Rutherford. You still ask your price?

John. I told you — the thing's mine — I made it.

Rutherford [to John]. You've looked at it — fair and honest?

Dick. Oh, what is the use of talking like this now? Father! you surely must see — under the circumstances — it isn't right — it isn't decent.

John. It's perfectly fair and just what I ask. It benefits us both, the way I want it. You've made your bit. Rutherfords' has served its purpose — and it's coming to an end — only you don't see it, Guv'nor. Oh, I know you're fond of the old place and all that — it's only natural — but you can't live for ever — and I'm all right — if I get my price. . . .

Rutherford. So much down for yourself — and the devil take Rutherfords'.

John. You put it that way —

Rutherford. Yes or no?

John. Well — yes. [*A knock is heard at the outer door.*]

Dick. That's Martin, father —

John. I'll stay and see him — I may as well.

Rutherford. To-morrow — to-morrow I'll settle wi' ye. [*John looks at him in amazement — Dick makes a sign to him to come away — after a moment he does so.*]

John [*turning as he reaches the door*]. Thanks, Guv'nor — I thought you'd come to see things my way. [*They go out.*]

Rutherford. Come in. [*Martin comes in, cleaning his boots carefully on the mat — shuts the door after him and stands cap in hand. Rutherford sits sunk in his chair, his hands gripping the arms.*]

Martin. I came up as soon as I could get away. [*Pause.*]

Rutherford [*as if his lips were stiff*]. You've stayed late.

Martin. One o' the pots in Number Three Furnace ran down, and I had to stay and see her under way.

Rutherford. Sit down. . . . Help yourself.

Martin. Thank 'ee, sir. [*He comes to the table and pours out some whisky, then sits with his glass resting on his knee.*] Winter's setting in early.

Rutherford. Ay ——

Martin. There's a heavy frost. The ground was hardening as I came along. . . . They do say as Rayner's 'll be working again afore the week's out.

Rutherford. Given in — the men?

Martin. Ay — the bad weather 'll have helped it. Given a fine spell the men 'ud ha' hung on a while longer — but the cold makes 'em think o' the winter — turns the women and bairns agin them.

Rutherford. Ah!

Martin. I thought you'd like to hear the coal 'ud be coming in all right, so I just went over to have a word wi' White the Agent this forenoon. [*He drinks, then as the silence continues, looks intently at Rutherford.*] You sent for me? [*Janet comes in carrying a reading-lamp. She halts for a moment on seeing Martin. He gets up awkwardly.*]

Martin [*touching his forelock*]. Evenin'.

Janet. Good evening. [*She sets the lamp on the desk. Rutherford remains in the same position till she goes out, closing the door. There is a moment's silence, then Martin straightens himself, and they look at each other.*]

Martin [*hoarsely*]. You're wanting summat wi' me?

Rutherford. I want the receipt of Mr. John's metal.

Martin [*between amazement and relief*]. Eh?

Rutherford. You've got it.

Martin. Ay —

Rutherford. Then give it me.

Martin. I cannot do that, sir.

Rutherford. What d' ye mean?

Martin. It's Mr. John's own — what belongs to him — I canna do it.

Rutherford. On your high horse, eh, Martin? You can't do a dirty trick — you can't, eh?

Martin. A dirty trick! Ye'll never be asking it of me — you never will ——

Rutherford. I am asking it of ye. We've worked together five and twenty years, master and man. You know me. You know what there is 'll stop me when I once make up my mind. I'm going to have this metal, d' ye understand. Whether Mr. John gives it me or I take it, I'm going to have it.

Martin. It's Mr. John's own; if it's ever yourn, he must give it to ye himself. It's not for me to do it. He's found it, and it's his to do what he likes wi'. For me to go behind his back — I canna do it. [*They look at each other — then Rutherford gets out of his chair and begins to pace up and down with his hands behind him. He speaks deliberately, with clumsy gestures and an air of driving straight to a goal.*]

Rutherford. Sit down. . . . Look how we stand. We've seven years losing behind us, slow and sure. We've got the Bank that's poking its nose into this and that, putting a stop to everything that might put us on our legs again — because o' the risk. . . . Rutherfords' is going down — down — I got to pull her up somehow. There's one way out. If I can show the

directors in plain working that I can cover the losses on the first year and make a profit on the second, I've got 'em for good and all.

Martin. That's so — and Mr. John 'll see it, and ye'll come to terms —

Rutherford. Mr. John's a fool. My son's a fool — I don't say it in anger. He's a fool because his mother made him one, bringing him up secret wi' books o' poetry and such like trash — and when he'd grown a man and the time was come for me to take notice of him, he'd turned agin me —

Martin. He'll come roond — he's but a bit lad yet —

Rutherford. Turned agin me — agin me and all I done for him — all I worked to build up. He thinks it mighty clever to go working behind my back — the minute he gets the chance he's up on the hearthrug dictating his terms to me. He knows well enough I've counted on his coming after me. He's all I got since Richard went his ways — he's got me there. . . . He wants his price, he says — his price for mucking around with a bit of a muffle furnace in his play-hours — that's what it comes to.

Martin. Ay — but he's happened on a thing worth a bit.

Rutherford. Luck! Luck! What's he done for it? How long has he worked for it — tell me that — an hour here and a bit there — and he's

got it! I've slaved my life long, and what have I got for it? Toil and weariness. That's what I got — bad luck on bad luck battering on me — seven years of it. And the worst bit I've had yet is that when it turns it's put into my son's hands to give me or not, if you please, as if he was a lord.

Martin. He'll come roond — lads has their notions — we all want to have things for ourselves when we're young, all on us ——

Rutherford. Want — want — lad's talk! What business has he to want when there's Rutherfords' going to the dogs?

Martin. That canna be, it canna — he'll have to see different.

Rutherford. He won't see different.

Martin. He'll learn.

Rutherford. When it's too late. Look here, Martin, we can't go on — you know that as well as I do — leastways you've suspected it. Ten years more as things are 'll see us out. Done with! Mr. John's made this metal — a thing, I take your word for it, that's worth a fortune. And we're going to sit by and watch him fooling it away — selling it for a song to Miles or Jarvis, that we could break to-morrow if we had half a chance. And they'll make on it, make on it — while Rutherfords' 'll grub on as we've been grubbing for the last seven years. I'm speaking plain now — I'm saying what I wouldn't say to another living man.

We can't go on. You've been with me through it all. You've seen me do it. You've seen the drag and the struggle of it — the days when I've nigh thrown up the sponge for very weariness — the bit o' brightness that made me go on — the times when I've stood up to the Board, sick in the heart of me, with nothing but my will to turn 'em this way or that. And at the end of it — I come up against this — a bit o' foolishness — just foolishness — and all that I done 'll break on that — just that.

Martin. Nay — nay ——

Rutherford. I'm getting old they say — old — there's new ways in the trade they say. And in their hearts they see me out of it — out o' the place I built afore they learnt their letters many of 'em ——

Martin. That 'll never be.

Rutherford. Why not? — when you've got but to put your hand in your pocket to save the place and you don't do it. You're with them — you're with the money-grubbing little souls that can't see beyond the next shilling they put in their pockets, that's content to wring the old place dry, then leave it to the rats — you're with a half-broke puppy like Mr. John that wants to grab his bit for himself and clear out. Twenty-five years . . . and you go snivelling about what Mr. John thinks of ye — what's right for you to do. Everybody for himself — his pocket or his soul, it's all one.

And Rutherfords' loses her chance through the lot o' ye. Blind fools!

Martin. You blame me — you put me i' the wrong. It's like as if I'd have to watch the old place going down year by year, and have it on my mind that I might ha' saved her. But Mr. John's got his rights.

Rutherford. You think I'm getting this metal for myself against Mr. John?

Martin. I'm loth to say it.

Rutherford. Answer me ——

Martin. Mr. John 'll see it that way.

Rutherford. Stealing like, out o' his pocket into mine. When men steal, Martin, they do it to gain something. If I steal this, what 'll I gain by it? If I make money, what 'll I buy with it? Pleasure maybe? Children to come after me — glad o' what I done? Tell me anything in the wide world that 'd bring me joy, and I'll swear to you never to touch it.

Martin. If you think what you're saying it's a weary life you got to face.

Rutherford. If you give it to me, what'll you gain by it? Not a farthing shall you ever have from me — no more than I get myself.

Martin. And what'll Mr. John get for it?

Rutherford. Rutherfords' — when I'm gone. [After a silence.] He'll thank you in ten years — he'll come to laugh at himself — him and his price. He'll see the Big Thing one day mebbe,

like what I've done. He'll see that it was no more his to keep than 'twas yours to give nor mine to take. . . . It's Rutherfords'. . . . Will you give it me?

Martin [*facing him*]. If I thought that we'd make a farthing out of it, either on us ——

Rutherford. Will ye give it me ——? [*Martin stands looking at him, then slowly begins to feel in his pockets.*]

Rutherford. Got it — on you?

Martin [*taking out a pocket-book*]. He'll never forgi' me, Mr. John won't — never i' this world. . . . It should be somewheres. He'll turn agin me — it'll be as if I stole it.

Rutherford. Got it?

Martin. Na, I mun' ha' left it up hame. Ay, I call to mind now — I locked it away to keep it safe.

Rutherford. Can ye no' remember it? Think, man — think!

Martin. Nay, I canna be sure. I canna call the quantities to mind.

Rutherford [*violently*]. Think — think — you must know!

Martin [*wonderingly*]. I can give it 'ee first thing i' the morning.

Rutherford. I want it to-night. . . . No, no — leave it — you might get it wrong — better make sure — bring it up in the morning. Good night to 'ee — good night. And remember — I

take your word to bring it — no going back, mind ye ——

Martin. Nay, nay. [*Turning to go.*] I doubt if Mr. John 'll ever see it in the way you do. If you could mebbe explain a bit when he hears tell of it — put in a word for me belike ——

Rutherford. I'm to bed.

Martin. I take shame to be doing it now.

Rutherford. Off wi' ye — off wi' ye — wi' your conscience so delicate and tender. Keep your hands clean, or don't let any one see them dirty — it'll do as well.

Martin. He worked it out along o' me. Every time it changed he come running to show me like a bairn wi' a new toy.

Rutherford. It's for Rutherfords'. . . .

Martin. Ay, for Rutherfords'— Good night, sir. [*He goes out. After a pause, Janet comes in to put things straight for the night. She goes into the hall and is heard putting the chain on the outer door — comes back, locking the inner door — then takes the whisky decanter from the tray and locks it in the sideboard, laying the key on the desk. Rutherford stands on the hearthrug. As she takes up the tray he speaks.*]

Rutherford. How long has this been going on atween you and Martin? [*She puts the tray down and stands staring at him with a white face.*]

Janet. How long?

Rutherford. Answer me.

Janet. September about — when Mary and Tony came. [*There is a long silence. When it becomes unbearable she speaks again.*] What are you going to do? [*He makes no answer.*] You must tell me what you're going to do?

Rutherford. Keep my hands off ye.

Janet. You've had him here.

Rutherford. That's my business.

Janet [*speaking in a low voice as if she were repeating a lesson*]. It wasn't his fault. It was me. He didn't come after me. I went after him.

Rutherford. Feel — proud o' yourself?

Janet. You can't punish him for what isn't his fault. If you've got to punish any one, it's me. . . .

Rutherford. How far's it gone?

Janet [*after a pause*]. Right at first — I made up my mind that if you ever found out, I'd go right away, to put things straight. [*She goes on presently in the same toneless voice.*] He wanted to tell you at the first. But I knew it would be no use. And once we'd spoken — every time was just a little more. So we let it slide. . . . It was I said not to tell you.

Rutherford. Martin . . . that I trusted as I trust myself.

Janet. I'll give him up.

Rutherford. You can't give him back to me. He was a straight man. What's the good of him

now? You've dragged the man's heart out of him with your damned woman's ways. [*She looks at him.*]

Janet. You haven't turned him away — you couldn't do that!

Rutherford. That's my business.

Janet. You couldn't do that — not Martin. . . .

Rutherford. Leave it — leave it. . . . Martin's my servant, that I pay wages to. I made a name for my children — a name respected in all the countryside — and you go with a working-man. . . . To-morrow you leave my house. D' ye understand? I'll have no light ways under my roof. No one shall say I winked at it. You can bide the night. To-morrow when I come in I'm to find ye gone. . . . Your name shan't be spoke in my house . . . never again.

Janet. Yes. [*She stands looking down at the table, then slowly moves to go, her feet dragging — stops for a moment and says in a final tone, almost with a sigh of relief.*] Then there'll be no need for anybody to know it was Martin —

Rutherford. No need to know. Lord, you drive me crazy! With all Grantley telling the story — my name in every public-house.

Janet. When I'm gone. [*Looking up.*] What did you say?

Rutherford. It's all over the place by now. Richard's heard it — your own brother. . . .

You've been running out o' night, I suppose. Somebody's seen.

Janet. What's Dick heard?

Rutherford. What men say about women like you. They got a word.

Janet. The men. . . . O God!

Rutherford. Ay — you say that now the thing's done — you'll whine and cry out now you done your worst agin me.

Janet. Let me be.

Rutherford. You're going to put things straight, are ye — you're going to walk out comfortable wi' your head up and your fine talk ——

Janet. I'm ready to stand by it.

Rutherford. It's not you that's got to stand by it — it's me! What ha' you got to lose? Yourself, if you've a mind to. That's all. It's me that's to be the laughing stock — the Master whose daughter goes wi' a working-man like any Jenny i' the place ——

Janet. Oh! You stand there! To drive me mad ——

Rutherford. That'll do — that'll do. I've heard enough. You've confessed, and there's an end.

Janet. Confessed? As if I'd stolen something. [*Brokenly.*] You put it all on to me, every bit o' the wrong.

Rutherford. Ah, you'll set to and throw the

blame on Martin now. I thought we'd come to it.

Janet. No, no. I've taken that. But . . . you make no excuse. . . . You think of this that I've done separate from all the rest — from all the years I done as you bid me, lived as you bid me.

Rutherford. What's that to do wi' it! I'm your father! I work for 'ee. . . . I give 'ee food and clothes for your back! I got a right to be obeyed — I got a right to have my children live respectable in the station where I put them. You gone wrong. That's what you done. And you try to bring it up against me because I set you up i' the world. Go to bed!

Janet. Oh, you've no pity. . . . [*She makes a movement to go, then turns again as if for a moment.*] I was thirty-six. Gone sour. Nobody 'd ever come after me. Not even when I was young. You took care o' that. Half of my life was gone, well-nigh all of it that mattered. . . . What have I had of it, afore I go back to the dark? What have I had of it? Tell me that. Tell me!

Rutherford. Where's the man as 'ud want you wi' your sulky ways?

Janet. I've sat and sewed — gone for a walk — seen to the meals — every day — every day. . . . That's what you've given me to be my life — just that!

Rutherford. Talk, talk, talk! Fine words to cover up the shame and disgrace you brought on me ——

Janet. On you?

Rutherford. Where 'd you ha' been if I hadn't set you up?

Janet. Down in the village — in amongst it, with the other women — in a cottage — happy maybe.

Rutherford [*angrily*]. I brought you up for a lady as idle as you please — you might ha' sat wi' your hands afore you from morn till night if ye'd had a mind to.

Janet. Me a lady? What do ladies think about, sitting the day long with their hands before them? What have they in their idle hearts?

Rutherford. What more did you want, in God's name?

Janet. Oh, what more! The women down there know what I wanted . . . with their bairns wrapped in their shawls and their men to come home at night time. I've envied them — envied them their pain, their poorness — the very times they hadn't bread. Theirs isn't the dead empty house, the blank o' the moors; they got something to fight, something to be feared of. They got life, those women we send cans o' soup to out o' pity when their bairns are born. Me a lady! with work for a man in my hands, passion for a man in my heart! I'm common — common.

Rutherford. It's a lie! I've risen up. You can't go back on it — my children can't go back.

Janet. Whose risen — which of us?

Rutherford. You say that because you've shamed yourself and you're jealous o' them that keep decent like gentlefolk —.

Janet. Dick — that every one laughs at? John — with his manners?

Rutherford. Whisht, wi' your wicked tongue!

Janet. Who's Mary? A little common work-girl no real gentleman would ha' looked at. . . . You think you've made us different by keeping from the people here. . . . We're just the same as they are! Ask the men that work for you — ask their wives that curtsey to us in the road. . . . Do you think they don't know the difference? We're just the same as they are — common, every one of us. It's in our blood, in our hands and faces; and when we marry, we marry common.

Rutherford. Marry! Common or not, nobody's married you that I can see —

Janet. Leave that — don't you say it!

Rutherford. It's the truth, more shame to 'ee.

Janet [*passionately*]. Martin loves me honest. Don't you come near! Don't you touch that! . . . You think I'm sorry you've found out — you think you've done for me when you use shameful words on me and turn me out o' your house. You've let me out o' gaol! Whatever happens to

me now, I shan't go on living as I lived here. Whatever Martin's done, he's taken me from you. You've ruined my life, you with your getting on. I've loved in wretchedness, all the joy I ever had made wicked by the fear o' you. . . . [*Wildly.*] Who are you? Who are you? A man — a man that's taken power to himself, power to gather people to him and use them as he wills — a man that 'd take the blood of life itself and put it into the Works — into Rutherfords'. And what ha' you got by it — what? You've got Dick, that you've bullied till he's a fool — John, that's waiting for the time when he can sell what you've done — and you got me — me to take your boots off at night — to well-nigh wish you dead when I had to touch you. . . . Now! . . . Now you know!

ACT III

It is about eleven o'clock on the following morning.

Janet is sitting at the table with a shawl about her shoulders talking in low tones to Mary, who is opposite.

Janet [after a pause]. You mean that you guessed?

Mary. Yes.

Janet. You knew all the time, and you didn't tell? Not even John?

Mary. Why should I tell him?

Janet. I would ha' told Martin if it had been you.

Mary. Not John.

Janet. It was good of you. You've always been better to me than I've been to you.

Mary. What are you going to do?

Janet. He says I'm to go. He's to come in and find me gone, and no one's to speak of me any more. Not John, nor Dick, nor Aunt Ann. I'm never to set foot in this room again. Never to lock up and give him the keys last thing. Never to sit the long afternoon through in the window, till the chimneys are bright in the dark. I've done

what women are shamed for doing — and all the night I've barely slept for the hope in my heart.

Mary. Hope?

Janet. Of things coming. I had a dream — a dream that I was in a place wi' flowers, in the summer-time, white and thick like they never grow on the moor — but it was the moor — a place near Martin's cottage. And I dreamt that he came to me with the look he had when I was a little lass, with his head up and the lie gone out of his eyes. All the time I knew I was on my bed in my room here — but it was like as if sweetness poured into me, spreading and covering me like the water in the tarn when the rains are heavy in the fells.

Mary. Is Mr. Rutherford very angry?

Janet. He won't never hear my name again. Oh, last night I said things to him, when he blamed me so — things he can't never forget. I was wild — mad with the bitterness of it. He made it all ugly with the things he said. I told him what I never looked to tell him, though I'd had it in my heart all these years. All the time I was speaking I was dead with shame that he should know, and I had to go on. But afterwards — it was as if I'd slipped a burden, and I was glad he knew, glad that Dick heard it in the street, glad that he sneaked of me behind my back — glad! For, when I'd got over the terror of it, it came to me that this was what we'd been making for ever since you came without knowing it, that we were to win

through to happiness after all, Martin and I, and everything come right. Because I've doubted. Men's lives are different to ours. And sometimes, when we've stolen together, and afterwards I've seen his face and the sadness of it, I've wondered what I had to give him that could count against what he'd lost.

Mary. But that's done with now.

Janet. Yes! That's why I dreamt of him so last night. It was as if all that was best in me was in that dream — what I was as a bairn, and what I'm going to be. He couldn't help but love me. It was a message — I couldn't have thought of it by myself. It's something that's come to me — here. [*Putting her hands on her breast.*] Part of me. [*Mary looks at her with a new understanding. After a pause she speaks again, very gently.*]

Mary. Where are you going when Martin comes for you?

Janet. I don't know yet. He'll say what to do.

Mary. Have you got your things ready?

Janet [*as if she scarcely heard*]. Yes.

Mary. I could see to them for you.

Janet. They're all ready. I put them together early in the box mother had. [*She breaks off, listening.*]

Mary. Janet, if ever the time should be when you want help — and it does happen sometimes

even to people who are very happy — remember that I'll come when you ask me — always.

Janet. He's coming now! [*She sits listening, her eyes bright. Mary goes out quietly, closing the door. Martin comes in from the hall.*]

Janet [*very tenderly*]. Martin! [*He stands in the doorway, his cap in his hands, his head bent. He looks spent, broken, and at the sight of him the hope dies slowly out of her face.*]

Martin. Is Mr. John about?

Janet. I don't know.

Martin. I mun see 'n. I got summat to say to 'n.

Janet. He's down at the Works maybe ——

Martin. I canna seek him there — I got summat to say to 'n.

Janet. You could give a message.

Martin. Nay. It's summat that's got to be said to his face — like a man.

Janet. Have you nothing to say to me, Martin — to my face like a man?

Martin. What should there be to say betwixt you and me? It's all said long since.

Janet. He's turned you away? [*He raises his eyes and looks at her for the first time.*]

Martin. Ay. You've said it. What I've been trying to tell myself these three months past. Turned away I am, sure enough. Twenty-five year. And in a minute it's broke. Wi' two words.

Janet. He'll call you back. He can't do without you, Martin. He's done it in anger like he was last night. He'll call you back.

Martin. He never calls no-one back. He's a just man, and he's in the right of it. Anger — there's no anger in a face that's twisting like a bairn's — white as if it was drained o' the blood. There's no anger in a man that stands still where he is, when he might ha' struck and killed and still been i' the right. [*Janet gets up slowly and goes to the fire.*]

Janet. Come and get warm by the fire. It's a bitter cold morning. Come and get warm. [*He moves slowly across and sits on the settle. She kneels beside him, takes his hands and begins to rub them.*]

Janet [*as if he were a child*]. Your hands are as cold, as cold — like frozen. It's all fresh and new to you now, my dear, the surprise of it. It'll pass — and by-and-by you'll forget it — be glad, maybe. Did you get your breakfast?

Martin. Ay.

Janet. What have you been doing — since?

Martin. Walking — walking. Up on the fell I been — trying to get it clear ——

Janet. On the fell, in such weather! That's why you're so white and weary. You should have come to me, my honey — you should ha' come straight to me. I would ha' helped you, my dear — out of my love for 'ee.

Martin. There's no help.

Janet. You say that now because your heart's cold with the trouble. But it'll warm again — it'll warm again. I'll warm it out of my own heart, Martin — my heart that can't be made cold, not if he killed me. Why, last night he was just the same with me as he's been with you. I know it all — there's nothing you feel that I don't know. We'll face it together, you and me, equal — and by-and-by it'll be different. What we done was for love — people give up everything for love, Martin, every day; they say there's some one in the world that does it. Don't 'ee take on so — don't 'ee.

Martin. Twenty-five year ——

Janet. Don't 'ee, my dear.

Martin [*brokenly*]. I'd rather ha' died than he turn me away. I'd ha' lost everything in the world to know that I was true to 'n, like I was till you looked at me wi' the love in your face.

Janet. Everything in the world. . . . I gave you joy — joy for the toil he gave you, softness for his hardness.

Martin [*without bitterness*]. Ay, you were ready. And you gave the bitter with the sweet. Every time there was him to face, wi' a heart like lead.

Janet. It was a power — a power that came, stronger than us both.

Martin. You give me the word.

Janet. You took away my strength. [*There is a silence. He sits looking dully at the fire.*] Any one might think me light. It isn't true. I never had any one but you, never. All my life I've been alone. When I was a little lass I wasn't allowed to play with the other bairns, and I used to make signs to tell them I wanted to. You'd never have known I loved you if I hadn't given you the word — and all our happiness, all that's been between us, we'd never have had it — gone through our lives seeing each other, speaking words that didn't matter, and grown old and never known what was sleeping in our hearts under the dulness. I wasn't light. It was only that I couldn't be shamed for you.

Martin. Nay, nay, it was a great love ye gave me — you in your grand hoose wi' your delicate ways. But it's broke me.

Janet. But — it's just the same with us. Just the same as ever it was.

Martin. Ay. But there's no mending, wi' the likes o' him.

Janet. What's there to mend? What's there to mend except what's bound you like a slave all the years? You're free — free for the first time since you were a lad mebbe — to make a fresh start.

Martin. A fresh start? Wi' treachery and a lyin' tongue behind me?

Janet. With our love that nothing can break. Oh, my dear, I'll help 'ee. Morning, noon, and

night I'll work for 'ee, comfort 'ee. We'll go away from it all, you and me together. We'll go to the south, where no one's heard tell of Rutherfords' or any of us. I'll love 'ee so. I'll blind your eyes wi' love so that you can't look back.

Martin [*looking up*]. Ay. There's that.

Janet. We'll begin again. We'll be happy — happy. You and me, free in the world! All the time that's been 'll be just like a dream that's past, a waiting time afore we found each other — the long winter afore the flowers come out white and thick on the moors —

Martin. He'll be lookin' to me to right ye. He'll be lookin' for that.

Janet. To right me?

Martin. Whatever's been, they munna say his daughter wasn't made an honest woman of. He'll be lookin' for that. [*There is a silence. She draws back slowly, dropping her hands.*]

Janet. What's he to do with it? [*He looks at her, not understanding.*] Father — what's he to do with it?

Martin. It's for him to say — the Master.

Janet. Master!

Martin. What's come to ye, lass?

Janet. It's time you left off doing things because of him. You're a free man. He's not your master any more.

Martin. What's wrong wi' ye?

Janet. You'll right me because of him? You'll

make an honest woman of me because he's looking for it. He can't make you do as he bids you now. He's turned you away. He's not your master any more. He's turned you away.

Martin. Whisht — whisht. [*He sinks his head in his hands.*] Nay, but it's true. I'll never do his work again. But I done it too long to change — too long.

Janet. He's done with you — that's how much he cares. I wouldn't ha' let you go, not if you'd wronged me.

Martin. Twenty-five years ago he took me from nothing. Set me where I could work my way up — woke the lad's love in me till I would ha' died for him — willing. It's too long to change.

Janet [*passionately*]. No — no.

Martin. I'll never do his work no more; but it's like as if he'd be my master just the same — till I die —

Janet. No, no, not that! You mustn't think like that! You think he's great because you've seen him at the Works with the men — everybody doing as he bids them. He isn't great — he's hard and cruel — cruel as death.

Martin. What's took you to talk so wild?

Janet [*holding him*]. Listen, Martin. Listen to me. You've worked all your life for him, ever since you were a little lad. Early and late you've been at the Works — working — working for him.

Martin. Gladly!

Janet. Now and then he give you a kind word — when you were wearied out mebbe — and your thoughts might ha' turned to what other men's lives were, wi' time for rest and pleasure. You didn't see through him, you wi' your big heart, Martin. You were too near to see, like I was till Mary came. You worked, gladly mebbe — but all the time your life was going into Rutherfords' — your manhood into the place he's built. He's had you, Martin — like he's had me, and all of us. We used to say he was hard and ill-tempered. Bad to do with in the house — we fell silent when he came in — we couldn't see for the little things — we couldn't see the years passing because of the days. And all the time it was our lives he was taking bit by bit — our lives that we'll never get back.

Martin. What's got ye to talk so wild? [*He moves from her as she talks and clings to him.*]

Janet. Now's our chance at last! He's turned us both away, me as well as you. We two he's sent out into the world together. Free. He's done it himself of his own will. It's ours to take, Martin — our happiness. We'll get it in spite of him. He'd kill it if he could.

Martin. Whisht, whisht! You talk wild!

Janet. Kill it, kill it! He's gone nigh to it as it is. [*As he makes a movement to rise.*] Martin, Martin, I love 'ee. I'm old — with the lines on my face — but it's him that's made me so. I'm bitter-tongued and sharp — it's him that's killed

the sweetness in me, starved it till it died. He's taken what should have been yours to have your joy of. Stolen it — remember that — and say he's in the right! Say it when you wish me young and bonny. Say it as I shall when I look in your face for the love that can't wake for me.

Martin. Bide still, bide still!

Janet. I wouldn't ha' turned against you, not if you'd nigh killed me — and you set his love up against mine! Martin! [*He gets up, not roughly, but very wearily, and moves away from her.*]

Martin. It bain't the time, it bain't the time. I been a bad servant. Faithless. We can twist words like we done all along to make it seem different, but there it stands. Leave him, when you talk to me. Leave him. . . . Mebbe he's had his mind full of a big work when you've took a spite at him.

Janet. Ah!

Martin. Womenfolk has their fancies, and mebbe they don't know the harshness that's in the heart of every man that fights his way i' the world when he comes into the four walls of his bit hoose of a night and sees the littleness of it. [*Standing by the table*]. I'm a plain man with no book larning, and mebbe I don't see far. But I've watched the Master year in year out, and I never seed him do a thing, nor say a thing, that he warn't in the right of. And there's not a man among them

that can say different. [*Taking up his cap.*] I'll be seekin' Mr. John.

Janet [*speaks in a dull, toneless voice, kneeling where he left her*]. He says I have to be gone by the time he come in. Where am I to go to? [*He turns to look at her with a puzzled face.*]

Martin. Ay. There's that.

Janet. Where am I to go to?

Martin. It would be best to go a bit away — where ye wouldna be seen for a while.

Janet. Where's the place — far enough?

Martin. There's Horkesley — up the line. Or Hillgarth yonder. He's not likely to be knawed thereabouts.

Janet. I haven't any money. [*Martin slowly counts out some coins on the table.*]

Martin. It'll be a hard life for you, and you not used to it. Work early and late — wi' a bairn mebbe. Bitter cold i' the winter mornings wi' the fire to light and the breakfast to get, and you not used to it; we mun just bide it, the pair on us. Make the best of it. I've saved two hundred pounds. There'll be summat to get along on whilst I look for a job. Afterwards we mun just bide it. [*There is a silence.*]

Janet [*without bitterness*]. Take up your money.

Martin [*puzzled*]. It's for you, lass.

Janet. Take up your money. I'll have no need

of it. [*After a moment he picks it up and returns it to his pocket.*]

Janet [*still kneeling*]. After all, you'd give the world to ha' been true to him — you'd give me, that you said was the world. He'd have you back if it wasn't for me. He needs you for the Works. If I was out of it there'd be no more reason — you'd go back, and people would think it all a mistake about you and me. Gossip. After a bit he'd forget and be the same. Because he needs you for the Works. Men forgive men easy where it's a woman, they say, and you could blame me, the pair of you. Me that gave you the word. [*Mary comes in hurriedly.*]

Mary. John's coming. He's coming across from the Works. [*Martin turns to face the door. Janet does not move. John comes in excited and nervous.*]

John [*awkwardly*]. Hullo! [*He looks at Janet and speaks to Martin.*] What are you here for?

Martin. Mr. John — I summat to say to you — summat I must say afore I go.

John. You'd better keep quiet, I should think. Oh, I know! I've been with the Guv'nor, and he's told me plain enough. You'd better keep quiet.

Mary. John, you must listen.

John. I tell you I know! The less we talk about it the better; I should think you would see

that — the whole beastly, disreputable business. I can't stay — I can't talk calmly, if you can — I'm better out of it. [*He makes for the door. Martin stops him.*]

Martin. Mr. John. . . . You been wi' the Master. What was it he told you — plain enough?

John [*significantly*]. What was it!

Martin. Did he tell you he'd got your metal?
[*John looks at him.*]

John. Are you mad?

Martin. I've give it him — I took it him this morning, and when he got it safe he turned me away. That's what I got to say.

John [*sharply*]. I don't believe it! You can't have! You haven't got the quantities!

Martin. The paper I took the last trial we made —

John [*his voice high-pitched with excitement*]. Don't — don't play the fool.

Martin. I'm speaking God's truth, and you'd best take it. Yesterday night he sent for me — and I give it him, because he asked me for it. He was i' the right, yesterday night — I don't call to mind how. And just now I give it him. That's what I got to say. [*John stands staring at him speechless. Martin, having said what he came to say, turns to go. Mary, suddenly realising what it all means, makes an involuntary movement to stop him.*]

Mary. Martin! You've given the receipt to

Mr. Rutherford! He's got it — he'll take the money from it! . . . You're sure of what you say, Martin? You haven't made a mistake?

Martin. Mistake?

Mary. You may have got it wrong — the quantities, or whatever it is. It all depends on that, doesn't it? The least slip would put it all wrong, wouldn't it?

Martin [*tired out and dull*]. There's no mistake.

Mary [*with a despairing movement*]. Oh! you don't know what you've done!

John [*almost in tears*]. He knows well enough — you knew well enough. You're a thief — you're as bad as he is — you two behind my back. It was mine — the only chance I had. Damn him! damn him! You've done for yourself, that's one thing — you're done for! You'll not get anything out of it now, not a farthing. He's twisted you round his finger, making you think you'd have the pickings, has he? And then thrown you out into the street for a fool and worse. You're done for! . . . You've worked with me, seen it grow. I never thought but to trust you as I trusted myself — and you give it away thinking to make a bit behind my back! You'll not get a farthing now — not a farthing — you're done for.

Martin. Hard words, Mr. John, from you to me. But I done it, and I mun bide by it.

John. Oh, clear out — don't talk to me. By Heaven! I'll be even with him yet.

Martin. I done it — but it bain't true what you think, that I looked to make a bit. I give it to him, but I had no thought o' gain by what I done. . . . It's past me — it's all past me — I canna call it to mind, nor see it plain. But I know one thing, that I never thought to make a penny. [*Suddenly 'remembering.'*] It was for Rutherfords' — that's what he said — I mind it now. He said, for Rutherfords' — and I seed it yesterday night. It was as clear as day — yesterday night. [*No one answers. After a moment he goes out. As the outer door closes John suddenly goes to Rutherford's desk and begins pulling out drawers as if searching for something.*]

Mary [*watching him*]. What are you doing?

John. Where's the key, curse it!

Mary [*sharply*]. You can't do that!

John. Do what? I'm going to get even.

Mary. Not money! You can't take his money!

John [*unlocking the cash box*]. Just be quiet, will you? He's taken all I have. [*He empties the money out on to the desk, his hands shaking.*] Fifteen — twenty — twenty-three. And it's twenty-three thousand he owes me more like, that he's stolen. Is there any more — a sixpence I've missed, that'll help to put us even? Twenty-three quid — curse him! And he stood and talked to me not an hour ago, and all the time he knew!

He's mean, that's what he is — mean and petty-minded. No one else could have done it — to go and get at Martin behind my back because he knew I was going to be one too many for him.

Mary [*imploringly*]. Put it back! Oh, put it back!

John. Oh, shut up, Mollie.

Mary. Don't take it, John.

John. I tell you it's mine, by right — you don't understand. . . . How am I to get along if I don't?

Mary. You've not got to do this, John — for Tony's sake. I don't care what he's done to you — you've not got to do it.

John. Don't make a tragedy out of nothing. It's plain common sense! [*Angrily*.] And don't look at me as if I were stealing. It's mine, I tell you. I only wish there were a few thousands — I'd take them!

Mary. John, listen to me. I've never seriously asked you to do anything for me in my life. Just this once — I ask you to put that money back.

John. My dear girl, don't be so foolish ——

Mary [*compelling him to listen to her*]. Listen! You're Tony's father! I can't help it if you think I'm making a tragedy out of what seems to you a simple thing. One day he'll know — some one 'll tell him that you stole money — well then, that you took money that wasn't yours, because you thought you had the right to it. What

will it be like for him? Try and realise — we've no right to live as we like — we've had our day together, you and I — but it's past, and we know it. He's what matters now — and we've got to live decently for him — keep straight for him —

John [answering her like an angry child]. Then do it! I've had enough — I'm sick of it. [Janet, who all this time has been kneeling where Martin left her, gets up suddenly, stumbling forward as if she were blind. The other two stop involuntarily and watch her as she makes for the door, dragging her shawl over her head. As the outer door shuts on her, Mary with a half-cry makes a movement to follow her.]

Mary. Janet!

John. Oh, let her be!

Mary [facing the door]. Where's she going to?

John. I'm not going to argue — I've done that too long — listening to first one and then another of you. What's come of it? You wouldn't let me go out and sell the thing while it was still mine to sell. I might have been a rich man if I'd been let to go my own way! You were always dragging me back, everything I did — with your talk. Tony — you're perpetually cramming him down my throat, till I'm sick of the very name of the poor little beggar. How much better off is he for your interfering? Give up this and give up that — I've lost everything I ever had by doing as you said. Anybody would have bought it, any-

body! and made a fortune out of it — and there it is lost! gone into Rutherfords', like everything else. Damn the place! damn it! Oh, let him wait! I'll be even with him. I came back once because I was a soft fool — this time I'll starve sooner.

Mary. You're going away?

John. Yes, I'm going for good and all. [*She stands looking at him.*]

Mary. Where are you going to?

John. London — anywhere. Canada probably — that's the place to strike out on your own —

Mary. You mean to work then?

John [*impatiently*]. Of course. We can't live for ever on twenty-three quid.

Mary. What are you going to work at?

John. Anything — as long as I show him —

Mary. But what — what?

John. Oh, there'll be something. Damn it, Mary, what right have you to catechise?

Mary. Don't, please. I'm not catechising; I want to know. It's a question of living. What are you going to do when you've spent what you've got?

John [*trying not to look shamefaced as he makes the suggestion*]. You could go back to Mason's for a bit — they'd be glad enough to have you.

Mary. Go back?

John [*resentfully*]. Well, I suppose you won't mind helping for a bit till I see my way. What was the screw you got?

Mary. Twenty-five.

John. That would help if the worst came to the worst.

Mary. We lived on it before.

John. We could put up at the same lodgings for a bit. They're cheap.

Mary. Walton Street.

John [loudly]. Anyway, I'm going to be even with him — I'll see him damned before I submit. I've put up with it long enough for your sake — I'm going to get a bit of my own back for once. After all, I'm his son — you can't count Dick; when I'm gone he'll begin to see what he's lost. Why, he may as well sell Rutherfords' outright — with no one to come after him. He's worked for that — all his life! Lord! I'd give something to see his face when he comes in and asks for me! [*Mary makes no answer, as indeed there is none to make. She speaks again, not bitterly, but as one stating a fact.*]

Mary. So that's your plan? [*There is a silence, in which he cannot meet her eyes. She repeats, without hope.*] *John,* once more — from my soul I ask you to do what I wish.

John [impatiently]. What about?

Mary. The money. To put it back! [*He makes a movement of desperate irritation.*] No, don't answer just for a moment. You don't know how much depends on this — for us both. Our future life — perhaps our last chance of happiness

together — you don't know what it may decide.

John. I tell you you don't understand. [*There is a blank silence. He moves uncomfortably.*] You can't see. What's twenty-three quid! [*She makes a despairing movement.*]

Mary [*in a changed voice*]. I'm afraid you'll find it rather a burden having me and Tony — while you're seeing your way, I mean.

John. A burden? You? Why, you've just said you could help at Mason's —

Mary. I can't go out all day and leave Tony.

John. Old Mrs. What's-'er-name would keep an eye on him.

Mary. It would free you a good deal if we weren't with you.

John. Of course if you won't do anything to help —

Mary [*after a pause*]. How would it be if you went alone? Then — when you've seen your way — when you've made enough just to live decently — you could write and we could come to you. Somewhere that would do for Tony — wherever it may be.

John. In a month or two.

Mary. In a month or two.

John [*awkwardly*]. Well, perhaps it would be better — as you suggest it. I really don't exactly see how I'm going to manage the two of you. . . . You mean — stay on here in the meantime?

Mary. Yes — stay on here.

John. But the Guv'nor — I'm afraid it'll be pretty rotten for you without me.

Mary. That's all right.

John [*irritably*]. All these stupid little details — we lose sight of the real issue. That's settled, then.

Mary. Yes — settled. [*She moves, passing her hand over her eyes.*] How are you going?

John [*relieved*]. What's the time now? Close on twelve!

Mary. You're not thinking of going now — at once!

John. There's the one o'clock train. I'll get old Smith to drive me to the Junction — it doesn't stop.

Mary. There won't be time to pack your things.

John. Send them after me.

Mary. You've no food to take with you.

John. That doesn't matter; I'll get some on the way.

Mary [*suddenly*]. You can't go like this! We must talk — we can't end it all like this.

John. I must — I didn't know it was so late — he'll be in to dinner. Cheer up, dear, it's only for a little while. I hate it too, but it wouldn't do for him to find me here. It would look — weak.

Mary. No, no — you're right — you mustn't meet — it would do no good. [*She stands undecided for a moment, then goes quickly into the hall*

and brings his overcoat.] It's bitter cold. And it's an open trap, isn't it?

John. I shall be all right. [*She helps him on with the coat.*] It won't be long — the time 'll pass before you know where you are; it always does — I haven't time to see the kid — it's the only thing to be done — other fellows make their fortunes every day, why shouldn't I?

Mary [*as if he were a child*]. Yes, yes, why shouldn't you?

John. Something 'll turn up — and I've got the devil's own luck at times — you'll see. I've never had a chance up to now. Some day you'll believe in me. [*He sees her face and stops short.*] Mollie ——! [*Takes her in his arms. She breaks down, clinging to him.*]

Mary. Oh, my dear — if I could!

John [*moved*]. I will do it, Mollie — I swear I will. Something 'll turn up, and it'll all come right — we'll be as happy as kings, you see if we aren't. Don't, dear, it's only for a little while.
. . . Well then — will you come with me now?

Mary. No, no, that can't be. Go, go — he'll be in directly. Go now. [*She goes with him to the outer door. Ann Rutherford comes in on her way through the room.*]

Ann. Who is it's got the door open on such a day? And the wind fit to freeze a body's bones! [*The outer door is heard closing. Mary comes in slowly, very pale.*] Come in, come in, for the

Lord's sake. [*Looking at her.*] What be ye doing out there?

Mary. He's gone.

Ann [*cross with the cold*]. Gone, gone, this one and that — John? And what 'll he be gone for? I never seed such doings, never!

Mary. Shall I make up the fire?

Ann. And you all been and let it down! Nay, nay, I'll do it myself. It'll not be up for ten minutes or more. Such doings. What 'll he be gone for?

Mary. He's had a quarrel with his father.

Ann [*putting logs on half-whimpering*]. A fine reason for making folks talk — bringing disgrace on the hoose, and all Grantley talking, and to-morrow Sunday — I never seed the like, never!

Mary. It's no use crying.

Ann. It's weel enough for you to talk — you bain't one of the family, a stranger like you. You don't know. When you've come up i' the world and are respected there's nothing pleases folk better than to find something agin you. What am I to say when I'm asked after my nevvie? Tell me that. And him gone off without so much as a change to his back — it aren't respectable. And there's Janet not ten minutes since gone along the road wi' her shawl over her head like a common working lass. Where it's to end, I'm sure I can't tell.

Mary. Perhaps it is ended.

Ann. Perhaps half the work's left and the house upset. Susan 'll be giving notice just now — her and her goings on. As if lasses weren't hard enough to get — and there's dinner and all —

Mary. Do you want the table laid?

Ann. It 'd help — though you've no call to do it — you got your own troubles — the little lad 'll be wanting you mebbe.

Mary. He's still asleep. I'll leave the door open and then I shall hear him. [*She opens the door, listening for a moment before she comes back into the room.*]

Ann. Janet 'll be back mebbe afore you've finished. Such doings — everything put wrong. I'll go and fetch the bread. [*She wanders out, talking as she goes. Mary takes the brown cloth off the table, folds it, takes the white one from the drawer in the sideboard, and spreads it. As she is doing so John Rutherford comes in. He stands looking at her for a moment, then comes to the fire.*]

Rutherford [*as he passes her*]. Dinner's late.

Mary [*going on with her work*]. It'll be ready in a few minutes.

Rutherford. It's gone twelve. [*She makes no answer. He takes his pipe off the chimney-piece and begins to fill it. As he is putting his tobacco-pouch back into his pocket his eyes fall on the table; he stops short.*]

Rutherford. You've laid a place short. [*Raising his voice.*] D' ye hear me, you've laid a —— [*She looks at him.*]

Mary. No. [*She goes to the sideboard and spreads a cloth there. He stands motionless staring at the table.*]

Rutherford. Gone. Trying to frighten me, is he? Trying a bit o' bluff — he'll show me, eh? And all I got to do is to sit quiet and wait for him to come back — that's all I got to do.

Mary [*quietly*]. He won't come back.

Rutherford. Won't he! He'll come back right enough when he feels the pinch — he'll come slinking back like a whipped puppy at nightfall, like he did afore. I know him — light — light-minded like his mother afore him. [*He comes to his desk and finds the open cash box.*] Who's been here? Who's been here? [*He stands staring at the box till the lid falls from his hand.*] Nay — he'll not come back, by God!

Mary [*hopelessly*]. He thought he had the right — he believed he had the right after you'd taken what was his.

Rutherford. I'd sooner have seen him in his grave.

Mary. He couldn't see.

Rutherford. Bill Henderson did that because he knowed no better. And my son knowed no better, though I made a gentleman of him. Set him up. I done with him — done with him! [*He*

drops heavily into the armchair beside the table and sits staring before him. After a long silence he speaks again.]

Rutherford. Why haven't you gone too, and made an empty house of it?

Mary. I'm not going.

Rutherford. Not going, aren't you? Not till it pleases you, I take it — till he sends for you?

Mary. He won't send for me.

Rutherford [*quickly*]. Where's the little lad?

Mary. Asleep upstairs. [*After a pause she speaks again in level tones.*] I've lived in your house for nearly three months. [*He turns to look at her.*] Until you came in just now you haven't spoken to me half-a-dozen times. Every slight that can be done without words you've put upon me. There's never a day passed but you've made me feel that I'd no right here, no place.

Rutherford. You'll not die for a soft word from the likes o' me.

Mary. Now that I've got to speak to you, I want to say that first — in case you should think I'm going to appeal to you, and in case I should be tempted to do it.

Rutherford. What ha' ye got to ask of me?

Mary. To ask — nothing. I've a bargain to make with you.

Rutherford [*half truculent*]. Wi' me?

Mary. You can listen — then you can take it or leave it.

Rutherford. Thank ye kindly. And what's your idea of a bargain?

Mary. A bargain is where one person has something to sell that another wants to buy. There's no love in it — only money — money that pays for life. I've got something to sell that you want to buy.

Rutherford. What's that?

Mary. My son. [*Their eyes meet in a long steady look. She goes on deliberately.*] You've lost everything you have in the world. John's gone — and Richard — and Janet. They won't come back. You're alone now and getting old, with no one to come after you. When you die Rutherfords' will be sold — somebody 'll buy it and give it a new name perhaps, and no one will even remember that you made it. That'll be the end of all your work. Just — nothing. You've thought of that. I've seen you thinking of it as I've sat by and watched you. And now it's come. . . . Will you listen?

Rutherford. Ay. [*She sits down at the other end of the table, facing him.*]

Mary. It's for my boy. I want — a chance of life for him — his place in the world. John can't give him that, because he's made so. If I went to London and worked my hardest I'd get twenty-five shillings a week. We've failed. From you I can get what I want for my boy. I want — all the good common things: a good house, good food,

warmth. He's a delicate little thing now, but he'll grow strong like other children. I want to undo the wrong we've done him, John and I. If I can. Later on there'll be his schooling — I could never save enough for that. You can give me all this — you've got the power. Right or wrong, you've got the power. . . . That's the bargain. Give me what I ask, and in return I'll give you — him. On one condition. I'm to stay on here. I won't trouble you — you needn't speak to me or see me unless you want to. For ten years he's to be absolutely mine, to do what I like with. You mustn't interfere — you mustn't tell him to do things or frighten him. He's mine. For ten years more.

Rutherford. And after that?

Mary. He'll be yours.

Rutherford. To train up. For Rutherfords'? You'd trust your son to me?

Mary. Yes.

Rutherford. After all? After Dick, that I've bullied till he's a fool? John, that's wished me dead?

Mary. In ten years you'll be an old man; you won't be able to make people afraid of you any more.

Rutherford. Ah! Because o' that? And because I have the power?

Mary. Yes. And there'll be money for his clothes — and you'll leave the Works to him when

you die. [*There is a silence. He sits motionless, looking at her.*]

Rutherford. You've got a fair notion of business — for a woman.

Mary. I've earned my living. I know all that that teaches a woman.

Rutherford. It's taught you one thing — to have an eye to the main chance.

Mary. You think I'm bargaining for myself?

Rutherford. You get a bit out of it, don't you?

Mary. What?

Rutherford. A roof over your head — the shelter of a good name — your keep — things not so easy to come by, my son's wife, wi' a husband that goes off and leaves you to live on his father's charity. [*There is a pause.*]

Mary [*slowly*]. There'll be a woman living in the house — year after year, with the fells closed round her. She'll sit and sew at the window and see the chimneys flare in the dark; lock up, and give you the keys at night —

Rutherford. You've got your bairn.

Mary. Yes, I've got him! For ten years. [*They sit silent.*] Is it a bargain?

Rutherford. Ay. [*She gets up with a movement of relief. As he speaks again she turns, facing him.*] You think me a hard man. So I am. But I'm wondering if I could ha' stood up as you're standing and done what you've done.

Mary. I love my child. That makes me hard.

Rutherford. I used to hope for my son once, like you do for yours now. When he was a bit of a lad I used to think o' the day when I'd take him round and show him what I had to hand on. I thought he'd come after me — glad o' what I'd done. I set my heart on that. And the end of it's just this — an empty house — we two strangers, driving our bargain here across the table.

Mary. There's nothing else.

Rutherford. You think I've used him badly? You think I've done a dirty thing about this metal?

Mary. It was his.

Rutherford. I've stolen it behind his back — and I'm going to make money out of it?

Mary. I don't know — I don't know.

Rutherford. It'll come to your son.

Mary. Yes.

Rutherford. Because I done that he'll have his chance, his place i' the world. What would ha' gone to the winds, scattered and useless, 'll be his. He'll come on, young and strong, when my work's done, and Rutherfords' 'll stand up firm and safe out o' the fight and the bitterness — Rutherfords' that his grandfather gave his life to build up.

Mary [*stopping him with a gesture*]. Hush!

Rutherford. What is it? [*They both listen.*] The little lad. He's waking! [*Mary runs out. The room is very silent as Rutherford sits sunk in his chair thinking.*]

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